

SENTIMENTAL BEAUTIES

FROM THE WRITINGS OF

DR. BLAIR.

SELECTED WITH A VIEW

TO REFINE THE TASTE,
RECTIFY THE JUDGMENT,
AND
MOULD THE HEART TO VIRTUE.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

— The men whom moral duty guides
And pure religion charms, with God himself
Hold converse; grow familiar, day by day,
With his conceptions, act upon his plan;
And form to his, the relish of their souls.

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PREFACE.



THE celebrity of Dr. BLAIR has been long established as a classical writer, a critic, a moralist, and a divine. His works recommend themselves, as well by the weight and importance of his observations, as by the strength and beauty of his language.

The passages here selected are not frittered down to mere apothegms, and single maxims; but contain fine illustrations, and, in some instances, complete essays on the respective subjects. They are adorned with all the charms which language will admit, without injury to its strength.

It may not be unnecessary to point out the advantages of such a companion for the pocket. Could we estimate the time wasted in the intervals of business and amusement, it would be found to bear a considerable proportion to the

length of human life. But he that carries a book of this nature in his pocket, will be able to redeem many valuable hours: not to say how useful it must be to have such a Monitor at hand; from how many scenes of dissipation it may guard, or how many acts of folly it may prevent.

Those who compare this Edition with the former, will immediately perceive it to be more than doubled in its size. The enlargements have been chiefly from the two last volumes of the Author's Sermons, which were not published when the former appeared.

The EDITOR has only to add, that, if the Reader receives as much pleasure and instruction from the perusal, as he did in the compilation, he will be more than satisfied—he will be highly gratified.

T. W.

CON.

CONTENTS.

	Page
<i>AFFABILITY</i>	1
<i>Affected Gaiety</i>	116
<i>Advantages of Labour</i>	136
<i>Ambition</i>	155
<i>Anxiety</i>	233
—— <i>the Vice of Age</i>	2
<i>Avarice</i>	3
<i>Awe</i>	5
<i>Anger and Envy contrasted</i>	23
<i>Appearances of Piety</i>	62
<i>Atheism (practical)</i>	196
<i>Compassion</i>	7
<i>Conscience</i>	8
<i>Content</i>	10
<i>Constancy and Firmness</i>	9
<i>Cheerfulness of Age, &c.</i>	51
<i>Christian Fortitude</i>	131
<i>Choice of Friends</i>	127
<i>Communion with God</i>	144
<i>Christianity Rational</i>	167
<i>Creation</i>	174
<i>Charity</i>	185
<i>Consolation</i>	192
<i>Comfort to the Penitent</i>	193
—— <i>in Affliction</i>	194

<i>Compassion</i>	-	-	-	243
<i>_____ of God</i>	-	-	-	242
<i>Deceit</i>	-	-	-	12
<i>Devotion</i>	-	-	-	14
<i>Discontent</i>	-	-	-	16
<i>Dissipation</i>	-	-	-	18
<i>Duty of Old Age</i>	-	-	-	20
<i>Danger of bad Examples</i>	-	-	-	237
<i>Devout Man</i>	-	-	-	55
<i>Disappointed Pride</i>	-	-	-	69
<i>Delay</i>	-	-	-	115
<i>Death</i>	-	-	-	118
<i>Divine Support</i>	-	-	-	132
<i>_____ Omniscience</i>	-	-	-	139
<i>_____ Presence</i>	-	-	-	137
<i>Death of Christ</i>	-	-	-	163
<i>Dissolution of the World</i>	-	-	-	178
<i>Dark Providences illustrated</i>	-	-	-	214
<i>Effects of Religion</i>	-	-	-	21
<i>_____ of loose Gratifications</i>	-	-	-	35
<i>_____ of Vice</i>	-	-	-	95
<i>_____ of Indolence</i>	-	-	-	134
<i>Events Uncertain</i>	-	-	-	25
<i>Envy</i>	-	-	-	133
<i>Ends of Religious Worship</i>	-	-	-	220
<i>Employment</i>	-	-	-	117
<i>Faith, Piety, and Virtue</i>	-	-	-	26
<i>Felicity equally distributed</i>	-	-	-	27
<i>_____ Temporal</i>	-	-	-	28
<i>_____ Spiritual</i>	-	-	-	29

CONTENTS.

vii

<i>False Sensibility</i>	-	-	-	III
— <i>Courage</i>	-	-	-	131
<i>Funeral</i>	-	-	-	119
<i>Forgiveness</i>	-	-	-	123
<i>Fortitude</i>	-	-	-	130
<i>Faith</i>	-	-	-	186
<i>Futurity</i>	-	-	-	190
<i>Fountain of Happiness</i>	-	-	-	201
<i>Friendship</i>	-	-	-	230
<i>Fidelity</i>	-	-	-	231
<i>God is Light</i>	-	-	-	202
— <i>is Love</i>	-	-	-	204
— <i>with respect to Man</i>	-	-	-	31
<i>Good Man</i>	-	-	-	34
— <i>Temper</i>	-	-	-	92
— <i>Nature</i>	-	-	-	161
<i>Gratitude</i>	-	-	-	36
<i>Grief</i>	-	-	-	122
<i>Goodness of the Creator</i>	-	-	-	176
<i>God of Nature</i>	-	-	-	198
<i>Happiness</i>	-	-	-	160
— <i>how judged of</i>	-	-	-	37
— <i>not Independent</i>	-	-	-	38
<i>History</i>	-	-	-	39
<i>Hope</i>	-	-	-	40
<i>Humanity</i>	-	-	-	41
<i>Human Vicissitudes</i>	-	-	-	222
<i>Ignorance of Good and Evil</i>	-	-	-	33
<i>Industry</i>	-	-	-	45
<i>Intent of Religion</i>	-	-	-	46

<i>Idleness</i>	-	-	-	118
<i>Instruction</i>	-	-	-	125
<i>Intemperance</i>	-	-	-	158
<i>Inactivity</i>	-	-	-	184
<i>Idle Curiosity</i>	-	-	-	206
<i>Justice and Mercy</i>	-	-	-	166
<i>Kingdom of God</i>	-	-	-	182
<i>Lawful Pleasure</i>	-	-	-	200
<i>Love of Justice</i>	-	-	-	47
<i>Long Life</i>	-	-	-	191
<i>Limits of Human Knowledge</i>	-	-	-	238
<i>Man of the World</i>	-	-	-	53
<i>— of Business</i>	-	-	-	6
<i>— of Pleasure</i>	-	-	-	64
<i>—'s Danger and Security</i>	-	-	-	11
<i>—'s real Dependence</i>	-	-	-	54
<i>Men of true Pleasure</i>	-	-	-	63
<i>Middle Age</i>	-	-	-	57
<i>Meditation</i>	-	-	-	226
<i>Moderation</i>	-	-	-	159
<i>Morality and Devotion</i>	-	-	-	16
<i>Mysteries of Providence</i>	-	-	-	211
<i>Mourner</i>	-	-	-	121
<i>New Heavens and Earth</i>	-	-	-	180
<i>— Year</i>	-	-	-	187
<i>Neglect of Religion</i>	-	-	-	59
<i>Necessity of Prudence</i>	-	-	-	72
<i>Old Age</i>	-	-	-	60
<i>Obscurity of Providence</i>	-	-	-	212

CONTENTS.

ix

<i>Pleasure</i>	-	-	-	164
—— <i>Sensual, &c.</i>	-	-	-	65
—— <i>of Old Age</i>	-	-	-	66
<i>Public Life</i>	-	-	-	52
<i>Presumption</i>	-	-	-	67
<i>Principle and Sentiment</i>	-	-	-	70
<i>Prosperity</i>	-	-	-	71
<i>Passive Tameness of Spirit</i>	-	-	-	90
<i>Progress of Vice</i>	-	-	-	126
<i>Prosperity and Adversity</i>	-	-	-	140
<i>Patience</i>	-	-	-	148
—— <i>under Affliction</i>	-	-	-	153
<i>Passionate Man</i>	-	-	-	146
<i>Passion and Patience</i>	-	-	-	152
<i>Piety</i>	-	-	-	162
<i>Providence</i>	-	-	-	188
<i>Propriety of Public Worship</i>	-	-	-	218
<i>Procrastination</i>	-	-	-	234
<i>Redemption</i>	-	-	-	74
<i>Reformation</i>	-	-	-	75
<i>Resignation</i>	-	-	-	78
<i>Religion</i>	-	-	-	75
—— <i>Ridicule of</i>	-	-	-	173
<i>Religious Reflection</i>	-	-	-	77
—— <i>Worship</i>	-	-	-	102
<i>Recollection</i>	-	-	-	112
<i>Regularity</i>	-	-	-	116
<i>Restraint</i>	-	-	-	151
<i>Religious Worship</i>	-	-	-	170
<i>Self-Knowledge</i>	-	-	-	48

<i>Superstition and Enthusiasm</i>	-	-	22
<i>Self-Communion</i>	-	-	79
<i>Settled Principles</i>	-	-	128
<i>Sincerity</i>	-	-	81
<i>Sloth</i>	-	-	82
<i>Sobriety of Mind</i>	-	-	83
<i>Solitude</i>	-	-	86
<i>Study of Man</i>	-	-	88
<i>Sensibility</i>	-	-	108
<i>Sense of the Divine Presence</i>	-	-	197
<i>Scoffer, the</i>	-	-	171
<i>Study of Nature</i>	-	-	176
<i>Sin the Source of Sorrow</i>	-	-	227
<i>Source of Evil</i>	-	-	229
<i>Slavery of Vice</i>	-	-	216
<i>True Honour</i>	-	-	104
— <i>Religion</i>	-	-	108
— <i>Virtue, &c.</i>	-	-	40
<i>Temperance</i>	-	-	91
<i>Time</i>	-	-	111
<i>Time Past Improved</i>	-	-	113
<i>The Tomb</i>	-	-	120
<i>Temporizer, the</i>	-	-	172
<i>Transitoriness of Life</i>	-	-	223
<i>Tranquillity</i>	-	-	226
<i>Unchangeableness of God</i>	-	-	224
<i>Union of Piety and Morality</i>	-	-	58
<i>Utility of Public Worship</i>	-	-	219
<i>Villain</i>	-	-	96
<i>Virtue</i>	-	-	98

CONTENTS.

xi

<i>Voluptuary</i>	-	-	-	100
<i>Virtue and Prosperity</i>	-	-	-	97
<i>Vanity of the World</i>	-	-	-	166
<i>Want of Foresight</i>	-	-	-	30
<i>World</i>	-	-	-	101
<i>Way of the World</i>	-	-	-	236
<i>Wisdom of God</i>	-	-	-	240
<i>Worldly Greatness</i>	-	-	-	36
<i>Youth</i>	-	-	-	103

EXTRACTS FROM

DR. BLAIR'S LECTURES ON RHETORIC, &c.

<i>On Speech</i>	-	-	-	245
<i>Of Taste</i>	-	-	-	246
<i>Improvement of our Faculties</i>	-	-	-	247
<i>Of Criticism</i>	-	-	-	249
<i>Taste and Genius distinguished</i>	-	-	-	251
<i>Of Genius</i>	-	-	-	252
<i>Of Grandeur</i>	-	-	-	253
<i>Of the Sublime</i>	-	-	-	255
<i>Sublimity of Scripture</i>	-	-	-	256
<i>Of Homer</i>	-	-	-	257
<i>Of Ossian</i>	-	-	-	258
<i>Use of Figurative Language</i>	-	-	-	260
<i>English Style</i>	-	-	-	261

<i>Directions for forming a Good Style</i>	-	262
<i>Rise of Oratory</i>	-	267
<i>Grecian Eloquence</i>	-	268
<i>Roman Eloquence</i>	-	271
<i>Cicero and Demosthenes compared</i>	-	273
<i>Eloquence of the Christian Fathers</i>	-	275
<i>English and French Eloquence</i>	-	276
<i>Means of Improving in Eloquence</i>	-	282
<i>The Antients and Moderns Compared</i>	-	288
<i>Of Dialogues</i>	-	293
<i>Epistolary Writing</i>	-	296
<i>Of Fictitious History</i>	-	300
<i>Of Poetry</i>	-	305
<i>Origin of Poetry</i>	-	306
<i>Union of Poetry and Music</i>	-	310
<i>Pastoral Poetry</i>	-	313
<i>Milton's Paradise Lost</i>	-	314
<i>On Tragedy</i>	-	320
<i>Origin of Tragedy</i>	-	322
<i>Character of Shakespeare</i>	-	323
<i>On Dramatic Poetry</i>	-	326

SENTIMENTAL BEAUTIES

OF

DR. BLAIR.

—o—
AFFABILITY.

IN order to render ourselves amiable in society, we should correct every appearance of harshness in our behaviour. That courtesy should distinguish our demeanour, which springs, not so much from studied politeness, as from a mild and gentle heart. We should follow the customs of the world in matters indifferent; but stop when they become sinful. Our manners ought to be simple and natural, and of course they will be engaging. Affectation is certain deformity—By forming themselves on fantastic models, and vying with one another in every reigning folly, the young begin with being ridiculous, and end in being vicious and immoral.

B

ANXI-

ANXIETY, THE VICE OF AGE.

IGNORANCE of what is good or evil, should correct anxiety about worldly success. As rashness is the vice of youth, the opposite extremes of immoderate care is the vice of advancing years; but since attention is so often frustrated, it should never be allowed to deprive us of tranquillity; that degree of uncertainty therefore ought to render us temperate in pursuit, calm the perturbation of hope and fear, and cure the pain of anxiety.

Anxiety is the poison of human life. It is the parent of many sins, and of more miseries. In a world where every thing is so doubtful—where we may succeed in our wish, and be miserable, —where we may be disappointed, and be blessed in the disappointment; what means a restless stir and commotion of the mind? Solitude cannot alter the course, or unravel the intricacy of human events—Curiosity cannot pierce through the cloud which the Supreme Being hath made impenetrable to the human eye—Wisdom commands man to retire after he has done all that was incumbent on him, and to possess his mind in peace. By going beyond this point, by giving himself up to immoderate concern about unknown events,
he

he can do nothing to advance this success, and does much to ruin his peace;—he plants within his breast the thorn which is long to gall him—To the vanity of life he adds vexation of spirit, which is wholly of his own creation, not of divine appointment.

For the dubious goods of this world were never designed by God to raise such eager attachment. They were given to man for his occasional refreshment, not for his chief felicity: by setting an excessive value upon objects which were intended only for his secondary regard, he changes their nature. Seeking more satisfaction from them than they are able to afford, he receives less than they might give; from a mistaken care to secure his happiness, he brings upon himself certain misery.

AVARICE.

ONE of the vices of old age, which appears the most unaccountable, is that covetous attachment to worldly interest with which it is often charged. But this too can naturally be deduced from the sense of its feebleness and decay.

In proportion as the vigour both of body and mind declines, timidity may be expected to encrease. With anxious and fearful eye, the aged look forward to the evils which threaten them, and to the changes which may befall. Hence, are they apt to overvalue riches, as the instruments of their defence against these dangers, and as the most certain means of securing them against solitude and disrespect.

But though this cautious frugality may be justified; sordid avarice can by no means be excused. They should be charitable and do good. They should mix beneficence to their friends, with a cheerful enjoyment of the comforts which befit their state. They will then receive the returns of real respect and love. Otherways, by their riches, they procure no more than pretended demonstrations of regard; while their ill-judged parsimony occasions many secret wishes for their death.

Chilled by the hand of time the heart loses that tender sensibility, with which it once entered into the concerns and sorrows of others. However, as in every period of life, humanity and friendship contribute to happiness, it is both our duty and interest to cherish the remains of the kind affections, nor suffer them to be blunted or destroyed

destroyed by sordid avarice. We should not, from having suffered much in the course of our long pilgrimage, become callous to the sufferings of others. But, remembering we still are men, study to keep our heart open to the sense of human woe.

Practised in the ways of men, we are apt to be suspicious of design and fraud; for the knowledge and distrust of mankind too often go together. We should not however suffer that wary caution, which is the fruit of experience, to dwindle into craft; for amidst the falsehoods of men, integrity is the best defence: he who continueth to the end to walk uprightly, shall continue to walk surely.

AWE.

AWE is the first sentiment which arises in the soul at the view of greatness. But in the heart of a devout man, it is a solemn and elevating, not a dejected emotion; for he glows, rather than trembles, in the divine presence. It is not the superstitious dread of unknown power, but the homage yielded by the heart to him,

him, who is at once the greatest and best of beings.

Omnipotence, viewed alone, would be a formidable object. But, considered in conjunction with the moral perfections of the divine nature, it serves to heighten devotion.

MAN OF BUSINESS.

AN uninterrupted intercourse with the world oppresses the man of business and ambition. The strongest spirit must at length fail and sink under it. The happiest temper must be soured by incessant returns of the opposition, the inconstancy and treachery of men. For he who lives always in the bustle of the world, lives in a perpetual warfare: here, an enemy encounters; there, a rival supplants him. The ingratitude of a friend stings him this hour, and the pride of a superior wounds him the next. In vain he flies for relief to trifling amusements. These may afford a temporary opiate to care; but they communicate no strength to the mind. On the contrary, they leave it more soft and defenceless, when molestations and injuries renew the attack.

COM-

COMPASSION.

COMPASSION is an emotion of which we ought never to be ashamed. Graceful, particularly in youth, is the fear of sympathy, and the heart that melts at the tale of woe. We should not permit ease and indulgence to contract our affections, and wrap us up in selfish enjoyment. But we should accustom ourselves to think of the distresses of human life, of the solitary cottage, the dying parent, and the weeping orphan. Nor ought we ever to sport with pain and distress in any of our amusements; nor treat even the meanest insect with wanton cruelty.

It has been objected, and it is to be feared with some reason, that female conversation is too frequently tinctured with a censorious spirit, and that ladies are seldom apt to discover much tenderness for the errors of a fallen sister. No arguments can justify, no pleas extenuate it.

To insult over the miseries of an unhappy creature is inhuman, not to compassionate them is unchristian. The worthy part of the sex always express themselves humanely on the failings of others, in proportion to their own undeviating goodness, and by that gentle virtue are prompted

to alleviate the distresses of the unfortunate and wretched; it prevents us from retaliating injuries; and restrains our severe judgments and angry passions.

CONSCIENCE.

DURING the gay and active periods of life, sinners elude, in some measure, its force. Carried round in the whirl of affairs and pleasures; intent on contrivance, eager in pursuit, amused by hope, or elated by enjoyment, they are sheltered by that croud of trifles which surrounds them from serious thought. But conscience is too great a power to remain always suppressed.

In the dark and solitary hour of distress, the recollection of the past becomes dreadful. It exhibits a life thrown away in vanities and follies, or consumed in flagitiousness and sin: crimes rise in their native deformity. How miserable the state of that man condemned to endure at once the pangs of guilt, and the vexations of calamity!

But

But a clear conscience enjoys, in the worst conjunction of human life, a peace, a dignity, an elevation of mind peculiar to virtue, not a presumptuous boast of innocence. The better a man is, he will be more humble and sensible in his failings. Of his piety and virtue, he reaps the fruits in the season of adversity: the improvement he makes; the temperate spirit with which he enjoys those advantages; the beneficent actions which he performed, and the good example which he set to others, remain behind.

By the memory of these, he enjoys his prosperity a second time in reflection. His mind has no load; futurity no terrors. For reflection cheers the lonely house of poverty, and attends the conscientious sufferer into prison and exile.

CONSTANCY AND FIRMNESS OF ACTION.

THE great motives which produce these must be of a palpable and striking kind. A divine legislator uttering his voice from heaven;—an omniscient witness beholding us in all our retreats;—an Almighty governor stretching forth his arm to punish or reward, disclosing the secrets of the invisible world, informing us of perpetual

petual rest prepared hereafter for the righteous, and of indignation and wrath awaiting the wicked.

These considerations overawe the world; support integrity, and check guilt; they add to virtue that solemnity which should ever characterise it—to the admonitions of conscience they give the authority of law.

CONTENT.

DURING the whole progress of human events, the principal materials of our comforts, or uneasiness, lie within ourselves. Every age will prove burdensome to those who have no fund of happiness in their own breasts. Could they be preserved from all infirmities of frame; could they have bestowed upon them, if it were possible, perpetual youth; still they would be restless and miserable, through the influence of ill-governed passions—It is not surprizing that such people are peevish, and querulous when old. Unjustly they impute to their time of life that misery, with which their vices and follies embitter every age.

Whereas,

Whereas, to good men, no period of life is insupportable, because they draw their chief happiness from sources which are independent of age or time; Wisdom, Piety, and Virtue, grow not old with our bodies; they suffer no decay from length of days; to them belongs only unalterable and unfading youth.

MAN'S DANGER AND SECURITY IN YOUTH.

IN that period of life too often characterized by forward presumption and headlong pursuit, self-conceit is the great source of those dangers to which men are exposed; and it is peculiarly unfortunate, that the age which stands most in need of the counsel of the wise, should be the most prone to contemn it. Confident in the opinions which they adopt, and in the measures which they pursue, the bliss which youth aim at is, in their opinion, fully apparent. It is not the danger of mistake, but the failure of success, which they dread. Activity to seize, not sagacity to discern, is the only requisite which they value.

The whole state of nature is now become a scene of delusion to the sensual mind. Hardly
any

any thing is what it appears to be: and what flatters most is always farthest from reality.— There are voices which sing around us, but whose strains allure to ruin. There is a banquet spread where poison is in every dish. There is a couch which invites us to repose, but to slumber upon it is death. Sobriety should temper unwary ardour; Modesty check rash presumption; Wisdom be the offspring of reflection now, rather than the bitter fruit of experience hereafter.

DECEIT.

THAT darkness of character, where we can see no heart—those foldings of art, through which no native affection is allowed to penetrate, present an object unamiable in every season of life, but particularly odious in youth. If at an age when the heart is warm, when the emotions are strong, and when nature is expected to shew itself free and open, we can already smile and deceive, what is to be expected, when we shall be longer hackneyed in the ways of men, when interest shall have compleated the obduration of our hearts, and experience shall have improved us in all the arts of guile?

Diffi-

Diffimulation in youth is the forerunner of perfidy in old age: its first appearance is the fatal omen of growing depravity and future shame. It degrades parts and learning, obscures the lustre of every accomplishment, and sinks us into contempt with God and man. The path of falshood is a perplexing maze. After the first departure from sincerity, it is not in our power to stop. One artifice unavoidably leads on to another; till, as the intricacy of the labyrinth increases, we are left entangled in our own snare.

Deceit discovers a little mind, which stops at temporary expedients, without rising to comprehensive views of conduct. It betrays a dastardly spirit. It is the resource of one who wants courage to avow his designs, or to rest upon himself. To set out in the world with no other principle than a crafty attention to interest, betokens one who is destined for creeping through the inferior walks of life. He may be fortunate, he cannot be happy; the eye of a good man will weep at his error: he cannot taste the sweets of confidential friendship, and his evening of life will be embittered by universal contempt.

DEVOTION.

IS the lively exercise of those affections, which we owe to the Supreme Being. It comprehends several emotions of the heart which terminate in the same object. The chief of them are veneration, gratitude, desire, and resignation.

It implies first, profound veneration for God, that is, an affection compounded of awe and love;—secondly, sincere gratitude for all his benefits: this is a warmer emotion than veneration; veneration looks up to the Deity as he is himself; gratitude regards what he is towards us;—thirdly, the desire of the soul after the favour of the Supreme Being, as its chief good and final rest;—and, fourthly, it advances to an entire resignation of the soul to God. It is the consummation of trust and hope. It banishes anxious cares and murmuring thoughts. It reconciles us to every appointment of Divine Providence; and resolves every wish into the desire of pleasing him, whom our hearts adore.

It is one of the noblest acts of which the human mind is capable. It is a powerful principle which penetrates the soul, which purifies the affections

fections from debasing attachments ; and, by a fixed and steady regard to God, subdues every sinful passion, and forms the inclinations to piety and virtue.

It expresses the spirit which must animate all religious duties. It stands opposed not merely to downright vice ; but to a heart which is cold and insensible to sacred things, and obeys the divine commands without ardour, love, and joy. It is rational and well-founded. It is of the highest importance to every other part of religion and virtue ; and, in fine, is the most conducive to our happiness. It diffuses an auspicious influence over the whole of virtue. It is often found a powerful instrument in humanizing the manners of men, and taming their unruly passions. It smooths what is rough, and softens what is fierce in our nature. It is the great purifier of the affections. It inspires contempt of the low gratifications belonging to animal life. It promotes a humble and cheerful contentment with our lot, and subdues the eager desire of riches and of power, which has filled this unhappy world with crimes and misery. The spirit of devotion is the gift of God. From his inspiration it proceeds ; towards him it tends ; and in his presence hereafter, it shall attain its full perfection.

MORALITY AND DEVOTION SEPARATELY INSUFFICIENT.

THE man of mere morality is a stranger to all the delicate and refined pleasures of devotion. In works of beneficence and mercy he may enjoy satisfaction; but it will be destitute of that glow of affection, which enlivens the feelings of one, who lifts his heart at the same time to the Father of the universe, and considers himself as imitating God.

The man again who rests solely on devotion, if that devotion opens not his heart to humanity, not only remains a stranger to the pleasures of beneficence, but must often undergo the pain arising from bad passions.

DISCONTENT.

IN the humble and seemingly quiet shade of private life, as well as among the great and mighty, discontent broods over its imaginary sorrows; preys upon the citizen no less than the courtier, and often nourishes passions equally magignant in the cottage and in the palace. Having
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ing once seized the mind, it spreads its own gloom over every surrounding object; it every where searches out materials for itself; and in no direction more frequently employs its unhappy activity, than in creating divisions among mankind, and in magnifying slight provocations into mortal injuries.

In situations where much comfort might be enjoyed, this man's superiority and that man's neglect, our jealousy of a friend, our hatred of a rival, an imagined affront, or a mistaken point of honour, allow us no repose. Hence discord in families, animosities among friends, and wars among nations! Look around us! every where we find a busy multitude. Restless and uneasy in their present situation, they are incessantly employed in accomplishing a change of it; and as soon as their wish is fulfilled, we discern by their behaviour, that they are as dissatisfied as they were before. Where they expected to have found a paradise, they find a desert.

The man of business pines for leisure; the leisure for which he had longed proves an irksome gloom, and through want of employment, he languishes, sickens, and dies.

The man of retirement fancies no state so happy as that of active life; but he has not engaged long in the tumults and contests of the world, until he finds cause to look back with regret on the calm hours of his former privacy and retreat.

Beauty, wit, eloquence, and fame, are eagerly desired by persons in every rank of life. They are the parent's fondest wish for his child, the ambition of the young, and the admiration of the old; and yet in what numberless instances have they proved, to those who possessed them, no other than shining snares, seductions to vice, instigations to folly, and, in the end, sources of misery.

DISSIPATION.

THE love of dissipation is allowed to be the reigning evil of the present day. It is an evil which many content themselves with regretting, without seeking to redress.

It is too often cultivated as the readiest relief to domestic infelicity; it draws the mind awhile from the subject of its distress, and suffers it to enjoy

enjoy an interval of ease; but this resource is as treacherous as it is momentary, and plunges the mind into more real distress than that from which it promised to relieve it.

Every one seems convinced that the evil so much complained of does really exist somewhere, though all are inwardly persuaded that it is not with themselves. All desire a general reformation, but few will listen to proposals of particular amendment.

Dissipation not only indisposes its votaries, by relaxing the tone of mind, and rendering it incapable of application, study or virtue, to every thing useful and excellent, but disqualifies them for the enjoyment of pleasure itself. It softens the soul so much, that the most superficial employment becomes a labour, and the slightest inconvenience an agony. The roses of pleasure seldom last long enough to adorn the brow of him who plucks them; for they are the only roses which do not retain their sweetness after they have lost their beauty.

DUTY OF OLD AGE.

A MATERIAL part of the duty of the aged consists in studying to be useful to the race who are to succeed them. Here opens to them an extensive field, in which they may so employ themselves as considerably to advance the happiness of mankind. To them it belongs to impart to the young the fruit of their long experience; to instruct them in the proper conduct, and to warn them of the various dangers of life; by wise counsel to temper their precipitate ardour, and both by precept and example to form them to piety and virtue.

It never appears with greater dignity, than, when tempered with mildness and enlivened with good-humour, it acts as a guide and a patron of youth.

Religion, displayed in such a character, strikes the beholders, as at once amiable and venerable. They revere its power, when they see it adding so much grace to the decays of nature, and shedding so pleasing a lustre over the evening of life. The young wish to tread in the same steps, and to arrive at the close of their days with equal honour.

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They listen with attention to counsels which are mingled with tenderness, and rendered respectable by grey hairs.

Aged wisdom, when joined with acknowledged virtue, exerts an authority over the human mind, greater even than that which arises from power and station. It can check the most forward; abash the most profligate, and strike with awe the most giddy and unthinking.

EFFECTS OF RELIGION.

RELIGION prepares the mind of man for all the events of this inconstant state, instructs him in the nature of true happiness; early weans him from an undue love of the world: afflictions do not attack him by surprise, and therefore do not overwhelm him; he is equipped for the storm, as well as the calm, in this dubious navigation of life. He is not overcome by disappointment, when that which is mortal dies; when that which is mutable begins to change; and when that which he knew to be transient passes away.

Religion

Religion not only purifies, but also fortifies the heart, so that the devout man is neither lifted up by success, nor enervated by sensuality; he meets the changes in his lot without unmanly dejection.—He is inured to temperance and restraint.—He has learned firmness, and self-command.—He is accustomed to look up to Supreme Providence, not with reverence only, but with trust and hope.

In prosperity he cultivates his mind; stores it with useful knowledge, with good principles, and virtuous dispositions. The resources remain entire when the day of trouble comes. His chief pleasures are always of the calm, innocent and temperate kind, and over those, the changes of the world have the least power. His mind is a kingdom to him, and he can ever enjoy it.

SUPERSTITION AND ENTHUSIASM.

SUPERSTITION and enthusiasm are two capital sources of delusion. Superstition, on the one hand, attaching men with immoderate zeal to the ritual and external part of religion. Enthusiasm, on the other, directing their whole attention to internal emotions, and mystical com-

communications with the spiritual world; while neither the one, nor the other, has paid sufficient regard to the great moral duties of the Christian life. Indeed the horror of superstition has sometimes reached so far, as to produce contempt for all external institutions; whilst persons of a devout turn being carried by warm affections at times into unjustifiable excesses, have thence made many conclude that all devotion was akin to enthusiasm.

ANGER AND ENVY CONTRASTED.

ANGER is less reasonable and more sincere than envy. Anger breaks out abruptly; envy is a great prefacer: anger wishes to be understood at once: envy is fond of remote hints and ambiguities; but obscure as its oracles are, it never ceases to deliver them till they are perfectly comprehended: anger repeats the same circumstances over again; envy invents new ones at every fresh recital: anger gives a broken, vehement, and interrupted narrative; envy tells a more consistent, and more probable, though a falser tale: anger is excessively imprudent, for it is impatient to disclose every thing it knows; envy is discreet, for it has a great deal to hide:

anger never consults times or seasons ; envy waits for the lucky moment when the wound it meditates may be made the most exquisitely painful, and the most incurably deep : anger uses more invective ; envy does more mischief.

Simple anger soon runs itself out of breath, and is exhausted at the end of it's tale, but it is for that chosen period that envy has treasured up the most barbed arrow in its whole quiver : anger puts a man out of himself ; but the truly malicious generally preserve the appearance of self-possession, or they could not so effectually injure : anger talks loudly of its own wrongs ; envy of its adversary's injustice : anger is a violent act ; envy a constant habit : no one can be always angry, but he may be always envious.

An angry man's enmity (if he be generous) will subside when the object of his resentment becomes unfortunate ; but the envious man can extract food for his malice out of calamity itself, if he finds his adversary bears it with dignity, or is pitied or assisted in it. The rage of the passionate man is totally extinguished by the death of his enemy ; but the hatred of the malicious is not buried even in the grave of his rival ; he will envy the good name he has left behind him ; he will envy him the tears of his widow,
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the prosperity of his children, the esteem of his friends, the praises of his epitaph; nay, the very magnificence of his funeral.

EVENTS UNCERTAIN.

MAN walketh in a vain show. His fears are often as vain as his wishes. As what flattered him in expectation, frequently wounds him in possession; so that the event to which he looked forward with an anxious and fearful eye, has often, when it arrived, laid its terrors aside; nay, has brought in its train unexpected blessings.

Both good and evil are beheld at a distance, through a perspective which deceives. The colours of objects when nigh, are entirely different from what they appeared, when they appeared in futurity. It is common for men to be deceived in their prospects of happiness. They judge by the sensations of the present moment, and in the fervour of desire pronounce confidently concerning the desired object. But reflect not that their minds, like their bodies, undergo great alteration from the situation into which they are thrown,

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and the progressive stages of life through which they pass.

Hence, concerning any condition which is yet untried, they conjecture with much uncertainty. In imagination they carry their present wants, inclinations, and sentiments, into the state of life to which they aspire. But no sooner have they entered into it than their sentiments and inclinations change. New wants and desires arise, new objects are required to gratify them; and by consequence their old dissatisfaction returns, and the void which was to have been filled, remains as great as it was before.

FAITH, PIETY, AND ACTIVE VIRTUE.

LIFE passed under the influence of such dispositions naturally leads to an happy end. It is not enough to say, faith and piety joined with active virtue constitute the requisite preparation for heaven. They in truth begin the enjoyment of heaven. In every state of our existence they form the chief ingredients of felicity.

FELI-

FELICITY EQUALLY DISTRIBUTED.

AMONG the different conditions and ranks of men, the balance of happiness is preserved in a great measure equal; and the high and low, the rich and the poor, approach in point of real enjoyment much nearer to each other than is commonly imagined. Providence never intended that any state here should either be completely happy, or entirely miserable.

If the feelings of pleasure are more numerous and more lively, in the higher departments of life, such also are those of pain.—If greatness flatters our vanity, it multiplies our dangers.—If opulence encreases our gratifications, it encreases in the same proportion our desires and demands.—If the poor are confined to a more narrow circle, yet within that circle lie most of those natural satisfactions, which, after all the refinements of art, are found to be the most genuine and true. For the happiness of every man depends more upon the state of his own mind than upon any one external circumstance; nay, more than upon all external things put together.

Inordinate passions are the great disturbers of life; and unless we possess a good conscience,

and a well-governed mind, discontent will blast every enjoyment, and the highest prosperity will only prove disgusted misery. This conclusion then should be fixed in the mind; The destruction of virtue is the destruction of peace. In no station—in no period are we secure from the dangers which spring from our passions. Every age, and every station they beset, from youth to grey hairs, and from the peasant to the prince.

FELICITY TEMPORAL.

OUR imperfect knowledge of what is good or evil should attach us the more to those few things, concerning which, there can be no doubt of their being truly good.

Of temporal things which belong to this class, the catalogue, it must be confessed, is small. Perhaps the chief worldly good we should wish to enjoy, is a sound mind in a sound body. Health and peace, a moderate fortune, and a few friends, sum up all the undoubted articles of temporal felicity.

He whose wishes, respecting this world, are the most reasonable and bounded, is likely to lead

lead the safest, and, for that reason, the most desirable life. By aspiring too high we frequently miss the happiness, which, by a less ambitious aim, we might have gained. High happiness on earth is rather a picture which the imagination forms, than reality which man is allowed to possess.

SPIRITUAL FELICITY.

WITH regard to spiritual felicity, we are not confined to humble views. Clear and determinate objects are proposed to our pursuits, and full scope is given to our most ardent desires. The forgiveness of our sins, and God's holy grace to guide our life; the protection and favour of the great Father of all, of the blessed Redeemer of mankind, and of the spirit of sanctification and comfort; these are objects, in the pursuit of which there is no room for hesitation and distrust.

Had Providence spread an equal obscurity over happiness of every kind, we might have had some reason to complain of the vanity of our condition. But we are not left to so hard a fate. The Son of God hath removed that veil which

covered true bliss from the search of wandering mortals, and hath taught them the way which leads to eternal life.

WANT OF FORESIGHT RESPECTING OUR SPIRITUAL STATE.

WE foresee the dangers of our spiritual, still less than we do those of our natural state; because we are less attentive to trace them. We are still more exposed to vice than misery. We cannot esteem him prosperous who is raised to a situation which flatters his passions, but which corrupts his principles, disorders his temper, and, finally, oversets his virtue.

In the ardour of pursuit these effects are not foreseen; and yet how often are they accomplished by the change of condition. Latent corruptions are called forth;—seeds of guilt are quickened into life;—a growth of crimes arises, which, had it not been for the fatal culture of prosperity, would never have seen the light.

Man, boastful as he is of reason, is merely the creature of his fortune, formed and moulded by the incidents of his life; incapable of pronouncing

nouncing with certainty concerning his own good or evil; of futurity he discerns little, and even that little he sees through a cloud. Ignorant of the alteration which his sentiments and desires will undergo from new situations in life;—ignorant of the consequences which will follow from the combination of his circumstances with those of others around him;—ignorant of the influence which the present may have on the future events of life;—ignorant of the effect which a change of condition may produce on his moral character and his eternal interests; how can he know *what is good for him all the days of his vain life, which spendeth as a shadow*. Instead therefore of lamenting this ignorance only, he should consider how it ought to be improved; what duties it suggests; and what wise ends it was intended by Providence to promote.

GOD WITH RESPECT TO MAN.

IN the midst of his glory, the Almighty is not inattentive to the meanest of his subjects. Neither obscurity of station, nor imperfection of knowledge, sinks those below his regard who worship and obey him. Every prayer which they send up from their secret retirement is listened

tened to by him; and every work of charity which they perform, how unknown soever to the world, attracts his notice.

He is the patron of the distressed. Compassion is that attribute of his nature which he has chosen to place in the greatest variety of lights, on purpose that he might accommodate his majesty to our weakness, and provide a cordial for human griefs.

All his creatures he governs with justice and wisdom—an afflicted state he commiserates—he is the refuge of the virtuous and pious, and invites them, amidst all their troubles, to pour out their hearts before him. The neglect, or scorn of the world, exposes them not to any contempt in his sight. No obscurity conceals them from his notice, and though they should be forgotten by every friend on earth, they are remembered by the God of heaven.

That sigh heaved from the afflicted bosom, which is heard by no human ear, is listened to by him; and that tear is remarked which falls unnoticed, or despised by the world. These present his administration under an aspect so mild and benign as in a great measure to disperse the gloom which hangs over human life.

IGNO-

IGNORANCE OF GOOD AND EVIL,
ITS UTILITY.

IT serves to check presumption and rashness, and to enforce a diligent exertion of our rational powers, joined with an humble dependence on divine aid. It moderates eager passions respecting worldly success. It inculcates resignation to the disposal of a providence which is much wiser than man. It restrains us from employing unlawful means, in order to compass our most favourite designs. It tends to attach us more closely to those things which are unquestionably good. It is therefore such a degree of ignorance as suits the present circumstances of man better than more complete information concerning good and evil. At the same time the causes which render this obscurity necessary, too plainly indicate a broken and corrupted state of human nature. They shew this life to be a short trial. They suggest the ideas of a land of pilgrimage, not of a house of rest.

GOOD

GOOD MAN.

HE is devout and benevolent, and according to his measure of religious knowledge, studies to perform his duty, prays to God always, and gives much alms to the people; joining piety with charity; faith with good works; devotion with morality, consistent with the connection ordained by God between them: for alms without prayers, or prayers without alms; morality without devotion, or devotion without morality, are extremely defective.

A good man acts with vigour, and suffers with a patience more than human, when he believes himself countenanced by the Almighty. Injured or oppressed by the world, he looks up to a judge who will vindicate his cause; he appeals to a witness who knows his integrity; he commits himself to a friend who will never forsake him. When tired with the vexations of life, devotion opens to him its quiet retreat, where the tumults of the world are hushed, and its cares are lost in happy oblivion.

There his mind regains its serenity: the agitation of passion is calmed; and a softening balm is infused into the wounds of the spirit; his heart
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is lightened; he does not feel himself solitary or forsaken; he believes God to be present with him, and as he hears a voice which speaks to none but the pure in heart, so he beholds a hand which sinners cannot see.

Those afflictions which appear to others the messengers of the wrath of heaven, appear to him the ministers of sanctification and justice. Where they discern nothing but the horrors of the tempest which surrounds them, his more enlightened eye beholds the angel who rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

EFFECT OF LOOSE GRATIFICATIONS.

BY a continued series of loose, though apparently trivial gratifications, the heart is often as thoroughly corrupted, as by the commission of any one of those enormous crimes which spring from great ambition, or great revenge. Habit gives the passions strength, while the absence of glaring guilt seemingly justifies them; and unawakened by remorse, the sinner proceeds in his course, till he waxes bold in guilt, and becomes ripe for ruin; for by gradual and latent steps the destruction of our virtue advances. We
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are imperceptibly betrayed; and from one licentious attachment, are, by a train of consequences, drawn on to another, till the government of our minds is irrecoverably lost.

GRATITUDE.

GRATITUDE is a pleasing emotion. The sense of being distinguished by the kindness of another gladdens the heart, warms it with reciprocal affection, and gives to any profession, which is agreeable in itself, a double relish, from its being the gift of a friend. Favours, though conferred by men, may become burdensome; but nothing of this kind can affect the intercourse of gratitude with heaven. Its favours are wholly disinterested. The Almighty aims at no end but the happiness of those whom he blesses, and who desires no return from them but a devout and thankful heart.

WORLDLY GREATNESS AND HONOURS,

WHEN enjoyed with temperance and wisdom, both enlarge our utility, and contribute to our comfort. But we should not over-
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rate them ; for unless we add to them the necessary correctives of piety and virtue, besides corrupting the mind, and ingendering internal misery, they lead us among precipices, and betray us into ruin.

HAPPINESS—HOW JUDGED OF.

IMPERFECTLY can we judge of real happiness or misery from external appearance.—We are seduced and deceived by that false glare which prosperity throws around bad men ;—we are tempted to imitate their crimes, in order to partake of their imagined felicity.

The pageant of grandeur displayed to public view, is not the ensign of certain happiness. We must follow the great man into the retired apartment, where he lays aside his disguise, in order to form any just conclusion. We must have a faculty by which we can look into the inside of hearts ; then should we behold good men in proportion to their goodness, satisfied and easy ; atrocious sinners always restless and unhappy.

HAPPINESS NOT INDEPENDENT.

NO individual can be happy, unless the circumstances of those around him be so adjusted as to conspire with his interest. For in human society, no happiness or misery stands unconnected and independent. Our fortunes are interwoven by threads innumerable: one man's success or misfortune, his wisdom or folly often, by its consequences, reaches through multitudes.

Such a system is too far complicated for our arrangement.—It requires adjustments beyond our skill and power.—It is a chaos of events into which our eye cannot pierce; and is capable of regulation only by him who perceives at one glance the relation of each to all. We are ignorant of the influence which the present transactions of our life may have upon those which are future.

The important question is, not what will yield to man a few scattered pleasures, but what will render his life happy on the whole amount. There is not any present moment that is unconnected with some future one.—The life of every man is a continued chain of incidents, each link
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of which hangs upon the former. The transition from cause to effect, from event to event, is often carried on by secret steps, which our foresight cannot divine, and our sagacity is unable to trace. Evil may at some future period bring forth good; and good may bring forth evil, both equally unexpected.

HISTORY.

HISTORY is a mirror which holds up mankind to their own view: in the circle of worldly affairs the same characters and situations are perpetually returning, and in the follies and passions, the vices and crimes of the generations that are past, we read those of the present.

The history of mankind has ever been a continued tragedy—the world a great theatre, exhibiting the same repeated scene of the follies of men shooting forth into guilt, and of their passions fermenting by a quick process into misery.

TRUE VIRTUE AND HONOUR.

MEN possessed of these, value not themselves upon any regard to inferior obligations, and yet violate that which is the most sacred and ancient of all—religion.

They should consider such violation as a severe reproach in the most enlightened state of human nature; and under the purest dispensation of religion, it appears to have extinguished the sense of gratitude to heaven, and to slight all acknowledgment of the great and true God. Such conduct implies either an entire want, or a wilful suppression of some of the best and most generous affections belonging to human nature.

HOPE.

HOPE to the soul, when distracted by the confusions of the world, is as an anchor to a ship in a dark night, on an unknown coast, and amidst a boisterous ocean. In danger it gives security;—amidst general fluctuation it affords one fixed point of rest.—It is the most eminent of all the advantages which religion now confers.

fers.—It is the universal comforter;—it is the spring of all human activity.

Upon futurity, men are constantly suspended; animated by the prospect of some distant good, they toil and suffer through the whole course of life; and it is not so much what they are at present, as what they hope to be in some after time, that enlivens their motions, fixes their attention, and stimulates industry.

Was this hope entertained with that full persuasion which Christian faith demands, it would in truth totally annihilate all human miseries; it would banish discontent, extinguish grief, and suspend the very feeling of pain.

HUMANITY.

GENTLENESS, which belongs to virtue, is to be carefully distinguished from the mean spirit of cowards, and the fawning assent of sycophants.—It renounces no just right from fear:—it gives up no important truth from flattery:—it is indeed not only consistent with a firm mind,

but it necessarily requires a manly spirit and a fixed principle in order to give it any real value.

It stands opposed to harshness and severity,—to pride and arrogance,—to violence and oppression:—it is, properly, that part of the real virtue charity, which makes us unwilling to give pain to any of our brethren.—It corrects whatever is offensive in our manners, and by a constant train of humane attentions, studies to alleviate the burden of common misery.—Its office is therefore extensive;—it is continually in action, when we are engaged in intercourse with men.—It ought to form our address, to regulate our speech, and to diffuse itself over our whole behaviour.

That gentleness which is characteristic of a good man, has, like every other virtue, its seat in the heart.—In that unaffected civility which springs from a gentle mind, there is a charm infinitely more powerful than in all the studied manners of the most finished courtier.

It is founded on a sense of what we owe to him who made us, and to the common nature of which we all share. It arises from reflection on our own failings and wants; and from just views of the condition and duty of man. It is native feeling heightened and improved by principle. It is

is the heart which easily relents; which feels for every thing that is human; and is backward and slow to inflict the least wound. It is affable in its address, and mild in its demeanour; ever ready to oblige, and be obliged by others; breathing habitual kindness towards friends, courtesy to strangers, long-suffering to enemies.

It exercises authority with moderation;—administers reproof with tenderness;—confers favours with care and modesty. It is unassuming in opinion, and temperate in zeal. It contends not eagerly about trifles; slow to contradict, and still slower to blame; but prompt to allay dissention and restore peace. It neither intermeddles unnecessarily with the affairs, nor pries inquisitively into the secrets of others. It delights above all things to alleviate distress; and, if it cannot dry up the falling tear, to soothe at least the grieving heart.

Where it has not the power of being useful, it is never burdensome. It seeks to please rather than shine and dazzle, and conceals with care that superiority, either of talents or of rank, which are oppressive to those who are beneath it. It is the great avenue to mutual enjoyment: amidst the strife of interfering interests, it tempers the violence of contention, and keeps alive
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the seeds of harmony.—It softens animosities, renews endearments, and renders the countenance of man a refreshment to man. It prepossesses and wins every heart. It persuades when every other argument fails; often disarms the fierce, and melts the stubborn.

To the man of humanity the world is generally disposed to ascribe every other good quality; of its influence all in some degree partake, therefore all love it.

The man of this character rises in the world without struggle, and flourishes without envy; his misfortunes are universally lamented, and his failings are easily forgiven. The inward tranquillity which it promotes is the first requisite of every pleasurable feeling. It is the calm and clear atmosphere, the serenity and sunshine of the mind.

Attacked by great injuries, the man of mild and gentle spirit will feel what human nature feels; and will defend and resent as his duty allows him: but to slight provocations he is happily superior. Inspired with noble sentiments, taught to regard, with indulgent eye, the frailties of men, the omissions of the careless, the follies of the imprudent, and the levity of the fickle; he
retreats

retreats into the calmness of his spirit, as into an undisturbed sanctuary, and quietly allows the usual current of life to hold its course.

INDUSTRY.

DILIGENCE, and proper improvement of time, are material duties of the young. To no purpose are they endued with the best abilities, if they want activity for exerting them.—In youth the habits of industry are most easily acquired.—In youth the incentives to it are the strongest; from ambition and from duty, from emulation and hope, all the prospects which the beginning of life affords.

Industry is not only the instrument of improvement, but the foundation of pleasure. He who is a stranger to it may possess, but cannot enjoy. For it is labour only which gives relish to pleasure.—It is the appointed vehicle of every good man.—It is the indispensable condition of our possessing a sound mind in a sound body.

We should seek to fill our time with employments which may be reviewed with satisfaction. The acquisition of knowledge is one of the most honour-

honourable occupations of youth. The desire of it discovers a liberal mind, and is connected with many accomplishments, and many virtues. But though our train of life should not lead us to study, the course of education always furnishes proper employments to a well-disposed mind. Whatever we pursue, we should be emulous to excel.

Generous ambition and sensibility to praise, are, especially at the youthful period, among the marks of virtue. We never ought to think that any affluence of fortune, or any elevation of rank, exempts us from the duties of application and industry; industry is the law of our being; it is the demand of nature, of reason, and of God.

INTENT OF RELIGION.

IF there be any principle fully ascertained by religion; it is, that this life was intended for a state of trial and improvement to man. His preparation for a better world required a gradual purification, carried on by steps of progressive discipline. The situation here assigned him was such as to answer this design, by calling forth all his active powers, by giving full scope to his moral

ral dispositions, and bringing to light his whole character. Hence it became proper, that difficulty and temptation should arise in the course of his duty; ample rewards were promised to virtue; but these rewards were left, as yet, in obscurity and distant prospect.

The impressions of sense were so balanced against immortality, as to allow a conflict between faith and sense,—between conscience and desire,—between present pleasure and future good. In this conflict the souls of good men are tried, improved and strengthened:—in this field their honours are reaped;—here are formed the capital virtues of fortitude, temperance, and self-denial;—moderation in prosperity, patience in adversity, submission to the will of God, charity and forgiveness to men amidst the various competitions of worldly interest.

LOVE OF JUSTICE.

A SENSE of justice should be the foundation of all our social qualities. In our most early intercourse with the world, and even in our most youthful amusements, no unfairness should be found. That sacred rule of doing all things

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to others, according as we wish they would do unto us, should be engraved on our minds. For this end, we should impress ourselves with a deep sense of the original, and natural equality of men.

Whatever advantage of birth or fortune we possess, we ought never to display them with an ostentatious superiority. We should leave the subordinations of rank, to regulate the intercourse of more advanced years. In youth it becomes us to act among our companions, as man with man. We should remember how unknown to us are the vicissitudes of the world; and how often they, on whom ignorant and contemptuous young men once looked down with scorn, have arisen to be their superiors in future years.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

TO acquire a thorough knowledge of ourselves, is an attainment no less difficult than important. For men are generally unwilling to see their own imperfections; and when they are willing to enquire into them, their self-love imposes upon their judgment. Their intercourse

course with one another assists their delusion, to which, of themselves, they are prone.

For the ordinary commerce of the world, is a commerce of flattery and falsehood; where reciprocally they deceive and are deceived, where every one appears under an assumed form, professes esteem which he does not feel, and bestows praise in order to receive it.

There are three characters which every man sustains; and these often extremely different from one another. One which he possesses is his own opinion;—another, which he carries in estimation of the world;—and a third, which he bears in the judgment of God:—it is only the last which ascertains what he really is. Whether the character which the world forms of him be above or below truth, it imports not much to know. But it is of eternal consequence, that the character which a man possesses in his own eyes be formed upon that which he bears in the sight of God.

He should enquire, after laying aside all partiality for himself, and exploring the heart with such accurate scrutiny, as may bring all hidden defects to light, whether he be not conscious, that the fair opinion which the world entertains of him, is founded on their partial knowledge,

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both of his abilities and virtues. He should be willing that all his actions should be publicly canvassed. He should bear to have his thoughts laid open.

When he has kept from vice, it should be known whether his innocence proceeded from purity of principle, or from worldly motives;—whether any malignity or envy rises within him, when he compares his own condition with that of others. He should enquire whether he has been as solicitous to regulate his heart, as to preserve his manners from reproach;—professing himself a Christian, whether the spirit of Christ has appeared in his conduct;—declaring that he hopes for immortality, whether that hope surmounted undue attachment to the present life.

Such investigation, seriously pursued, may produce to every man many discoveries of himself; discoveries, not pleasing, perhaps, to vanity, but salutary and useful. For he can only be a flatterer, but no true friend to himself, who aims not at knowing his own defects, as well as virtues.

CHEER-

CHEERFULNESS OF OLD AGE, AND LEVITY OF YOUTH, CONTRASTED.

CCHEERFULNESS, in old age, is graceful. It is the natural concomitant of virtue. But this is widely different from the levity of youth. Many things are allowable in that early period, which in maturer years, would deserve censure; but which, in old age, become both ridiculous and criminal.—By awkwardly affecting to imitate the manners, and to mingle in the vanities of the young; as the aged depart from the dignity, so they forfeit the privileges of grey hairs. But if by follies of this kind they are degraded, they are exposed to much deeper blame, by descending to vicious pleasure, and continuing to hover round those sinful gratifications to which they were once addicted.

Amusement and relaxation the aged require, and may enjoy; but they should consider well, by every intemperate indulgence they accelerate decay; instead of enlivening, they oppress and precipitate their declining state.

PUBLIC LIFE—ITS INCONVENIENCIES.

HE who lives always in public cannot live to his own soul. Conversation and intercourse with the world is, in several respects, an education for vice. From earliest youth we are accustomed to hear riches and honour extolled as the chief possessions of man, and proposed to us as the principle aim of our future pursuits. We are trained up to look with admiration on the flattering marks of distinction which they bestow. In quest of those fancied blessings, we see the multitude around us eager and fervent. Principles of duty we may, perhaps, hear sometimes inculcated; but we seldom behold them brought in competition with worldly profit.

The soft names and plausible colours under which deceit, sensuality, and revenge, are presented to us in common discourse, weaken, by degrees, our natural sense of the distinction between good and evil. We often meet with crimes authorized by high examples, and rewarded with the caresses and smiles of the world. We discover, perhaps, at last, that those whom we are taught to reverence and to regard as our patterns of conduct, act upon principles no purer than those of others.

MAN

MAN OF THE WORLD.

HE pretends that virtue is, at least, a respectable and honoured name, while piety sounds meanly in his ears—and claims to be a man of honour. He rests upon humanity—public spirit—probity—and truth. He arrogates to himself all the manly and active virtues:—but devout affections and religious duties he treats with contempt, as founded on shadowy speculation, and fit to employ the attention only of weak and superstitious minds. Hence this neglect of piety argues depravity of soul—inferns an irregular discharge of the duties of morality, and discovers a cold and hard heart.

He who acts from worldly wisdom lays principle aside, and trusts his defence to his art and ability. He avails himself of every advantage which his knowledge of the world suggests—he attends to nothing but what he considers as his interest; and unconfined by conscience, pursues it by every course which promises him success.

Persons of this character condemn themselves to live a most unquiet life;—they pass their days in perpetual anxiety—listening to every motion—startled by every alarm—changing their mea-

tures on every new occurrence,—and when distress breaks in over all their defences, they are left under it hopeless and disconsolate.

MAN'S REAL DEPENDENCE.

MAN should proceed with caution and circumspection through a world, where evil so frequently lurks under the form of good. To be humble and modest in opinion,—to be vigilant and attentive in conduct,—to distrust fair appearances,—and to restrain rash desires—are instructions which the darkness of his present state should strongly inculcate.

God hath appointed his situation to be so ambiguous in order both to call forth the exertion of those intelligent powers which he hath given him, and to enforce his dependence on his gracious aid. Surrounded by so many bewildering paths, among which the wisest are ready to stray, he should earnestly implore, and thankfully receive that divine illumination which is promised to the pious and humble.

What must be the fate of him who looks not up to heaven for direction, nor properly exerts
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the reason which God hath given him?—who brings neither patience nor attention to the search of true happiness?—who applies to no other counsellor than present pleasure, and with a rash and credulous mind delivers himself up to every suggestion of desire?

DEVOUT MAN.

HIS veneration is not confined to acts of immediate worship. It is the habitual temper of his soul. No place and no object appear to him void of God. When he surveys this vast universe, where beauty and goodness are every where predominant;—when he reflects on the numberless multitudes of creatures, who, in their different stations, enjoy the blessings of existence;—and when, at the same time, he looks up to an universal Father, who hath thus filled creation with life and happiness; his heart glows within him. He looks forward to immortality, and discovers the highest subjects of gratitude. He views himself as a guilty creature, whom divine benignity has received into grace, whose forfeited hopes it has restored, and to whom it has opened the most glorious prospect of future felicity.—He contemplates with astonishment the labours of
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the Son of God, in accomplishing redemption for men, and his soul overflows with thankfulness to him.

To inferior enjoyments, he allots inferior and secondary attachments.—He disclaims not every earthly affection.—He pretends not to renounce all pleasure in the comforts of this present state. Such an unnatural renunciation humanity forbids, and religion cannot require. But from these he expects not supreme bliss. He discerns the vanity which belongs to them all; and beyond the circle of mutable objects, which surround him, he aspires after some principles of more perfect felicity, which shall not be subject to change or decay.

But where is this complete and permanent good to be found? Ambition pursues it in courts and palaces, and returns from the pursuit loaded with sorrows—Pleasure seeks it among sensual joys, and retires with the confession of disappointment.

After exploring heaven and earth for happiness, to the devout man they seem a mighty void, a wilderness of shadows, where all would be empty and unsubstantial without God.—*True happiness dwells only with God.*

MIDDLE

MIDDLE AGE.

AS we advance from youth to middle age, a new field of action opens, and a different character is required. The flow of gay and impetuous spirits begins to subside. Life gradually assumes a graver cast; the mind a more sedate and thoughtful turn. The attention is now transferred from pleasure to interest; that is, to pleasure, diffused over a wider extent, and measured by a larger scale.

Formerly, the enjoyment of the present moment occupied the whole attention. Now, no action terminates alternately in itself, but refers to some more distant aim. Wealth and power, the instruments of lasting gratification, are now coveted more than any single pleasure;—prudence and foresight lay their plan;—industry carries on its patient efforts;—activity pushes forward;—address winds around;—here, an enemy is to be overcome;—there, a rival to be displaced;—competitions warm;—and the strife of the world thickens on every side.

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THE UNION OF PIETY AND MORALITY.

THIS forms the consistent, the graceful, the respectable character of the real Christian, the man of true worth. Either of them left out, one side of the character is only fair; the other side will be always open to much reproach. Hence we dishonour ourselves, and do great injustice to religion: as by division it is exposed to the censure of the world.

The unbeliever will scoff at such piety, where he sees neglect of moral duties. The bigot will decry all morality, where he sees a pretence of virtue, though a contempt of God. Whereas he who fears God, and is at the same time just and beneficent to men, exhibits religion to the world with full propriety. His character is above reproach. It is at once amiable and venerable.—Malice itself is afraid to attack him; and even the worst men respect and honour him in their hearts. He who fails materially either in piety, or virtue, is always obnoxious to the anguish of remorse.

NEGLECT

NEGLECT OF RELIGION.

WHERE Religion is neglected there can be no regular or steady practice of the duties of morality. The character will be often inconsistent; and virtue, placed on a basis too narrow to support it, will be always loose and tottering. For such is the propensity of our nature to vice, so numerous are the temptations to a relaxed and immoral conduct, that stronger restraints than those of mere reason are necessary to be imposed on man.

The sense of right and wrong, the principle of honour, or the instinct of benevolence, are barriers too feeble to withstand the strength of passion. For the heart wounded by sore distress, or agitated by violent emotions, soon discovers, that virtue without religion is inadequate to the government of life. It is destitute of its proper guard—of its firmest support—of its chief encouragement. It will sink under the weight of misfortune—or will yield to the solicitations of guilt.

Humanity, seconded by piety, renders the spring from whence it flows of course more regular and constant. In short, withdraw religion and you shake all the pillars of morality. In

every heart you weaken the influence of virtue ;
and among the multitude, the bulk of mankind,
you overthrow its power.

OLD AGE.

OLD Age is a stage of the human course, which every one hopes to reach ; it is a period justly entitled to general respect. Even its failings ought to be touched with a gentle hand. For though in every part of life vexations occur ; yet, in former years, either business, or pleasure, served to obliterate their impression, by supplying occupation to the mind.

Old age begins its advances by disqualifying men either from relishing the one, or for taking an active part in the other ; while it withdraws their accustomed supports, it imposes, at the same time, the additional burden of growing infirmities.

In the former stages of their journey, hope continued to flatter them with many a fair and enticing prospect ; but as old age increases these illusions vanish. Life is contracted within a narrow and barren circle. Year after year steals
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somewhat away from their store of comfort—deprives them of some of their ancient friends—blunts some of their powers of sensation—and incapacitates them for some function of life.

The querulous temper, to them imputed, is to be considered as a natural infirmity, rather than a vice: the same apology cannot be made for that peevish disgust at the manners, and that malignant censure of the enjoyment, of the young, which is sometimes found to accompany declining years.

It is too common to find the aged at declared enmity with the whole system of present customs and manners; perpetually complaining of the growing depravity of the world, and of the astonishing vices and follies of the rising generation. All things, according to them, are rushing fast into ruin. Decency and good order have become extinct; ever since that happy discipline, under which they spent their youth, has passed away.

Former follies vanish, and are forgotten.—Those which are present, strike observation and sharpen censure. Had the depravation of the world continued to increase in proportion to those gloomy calculations, which, so many centuries past, have estimated each race as worse than the

preceding; by this time, not one ray of good sense, nor one spark of piety and and virtue, must have remained unextinguished among mankind.

APPEARANCES OF PIETY.

THESE are often substituted in the place of the great duties of humanity and mercy. — Too many flatter themselves with the hope of obtaining the friendship of their Creator, though they neglect to do justice to their fellow-creatures.

But supposed piety is an invention of their own, unknown to reason—unknown in the word of God. For piety is a principle which regenerates the heart, and forms it to goodness. If, therefore, while piety seems ardent, morality shall decline; or if ever the regard to it should totally fail—if, whilst making prayers, no alms are given—if, whilst we appear zealous for God, we are false or unjust to men—if we are hard or contracted in heart, severe in our censures, and oppressive in our conduct, then conclude what we have termed piety, was no more than an empty name, resolving itself either into an hypocritical form of godliness—a transient impression of serious-

feriousness—an accidental melting of the heart—or the deliberate refuge of a deluded and superstitious, but, at the same time, a corrupted mind. For all men, even the most depraved, are subject, more or less, to compunctions of conscience.

MEN OF TRUE PLEASURE.

THE seat of enjoyment is the soul. None but the temperate, the regular, and the virtuous know how to enjoy prosperity. They bring to its comforts the manly relish of a sound uncorrupted mind. They stop at the proper point before enjoyment degenerates into disgust, and pleasure is converted into pain. They are strangers to those complaints which flow from spleen, caprice, and all the fantastical distresses of a vitiated mind. Purity and virtue heighten all the powers of human fruition. Moderate and simple pleasures relish high with the temperate.

Innocence confers ease and freedom on the mind; leaves it open to every pleasing sensation; give a lightness to the spirits, similar to the native gaiety of youth and health;—for prosperity is redoubled to a good man by his generous use of it;

it is reflected back upon him from every one whom he makes happy.

In the intercourse of domestic affection—in the attachment of friends—the gratitude of dependents—the esteem and good will of all who know him—he sees blessings multiplied around him on every side; like a tree in the midst of an inhabited country, affording to some friendly shelter; to others fruit, which is not only admired by all for its beauty, but blessed by the traveller for the shade, and by the hungry for the sustenance it has given.

MAN OF PLEASURE.

TO a man of pleasure every moment appears to be lost, which partakes not of the vivacity of amusement. To connect one plan of gaiety with another is his sole study, till in a very short time nothing remains but to tread the same beaten round—to enjoy what they have already enjoyed—and to see what they have often seen.

Pleasures thus drawn to the dregs become vapid and tasteless. What might have pleased long,

long, if enjoyed with temperance and mingled with retirement, being devoured with such eager haste, speedily surfeits and disgusts. Hence, having run through a rapid course of pleasure, after having glittered for a few years in the foremost line of public amusements, such men are the most apt to fly at last to a melancholy retreat; not led by religion or reason, but driven by disappointed hopes and exhausted spirits to the pen- sive conclusion, *that all is vanity.*

PLEASURE, SENSUAL AND SPIRITUAL.

THE refined pleasures of a pious mind are, in many respects, superior to the coarse gratifications of sense;—they are pleasures which belong to the highest powers and best affections of the soul; whereas the gratifications of sense reside in the lowest region of our nature. To the one the soul stoops below its native dignity; the other raises it above itself. The one leaves always a comfortless, often a mortifying remembrance behind it; the other is reviewed with applause and delight. The pleasures of some resemble a foaming torrent; which, after a disorderly course, speedily runs out, and leaves an empty and offensive channel: but the pleasures of

devotion resemble the equable current of a pure river, which enlivens the fields through which it passes, and diffuses verdure and fertility along its banks.

PLEASURES OF OLD AGE.

THOUGH, in old age, the circle of pleasure is contracted, yet within its limits, many of those enjoyments remain which are most grateful to human nature.

Temperate mirth is not extinguished by advanced years;—the mild pleasures of domestic life still cheer the heart. The entertainments of conversation and social intercourse continue unimpaired. The desire of knowledge is not abated by the frailty of the body, and the leisure of old age affords many opportunities for gratifying that desire. The sphere of observation and reflection is not so much enlarged by long acquaintance with the world, as to supply, within itself, a wide range of improving thought: whilst the aged are engaged in such employments as best suit the infirmities of their nature, they are surrounded, perhaps, with families, who treat them with attention and respect; they are honoured by their friends ;

friends; their characters are established, and are placed beyond the reach of clamour and the strife of tongues; and, free from distracting cares, can calmly attend to their eternal interests.

No age is doomed to total infelicity, provided that we attempt not to do violence to nature, by seeking to extort from one age the pleasures of another, and to gather in the winter of life those flowers which were destined to blossom only in its summer or its spring.

PRESUMPTION.

THE constant concomitant of Presumption is self-conceit and obstinacy; and of all the follies incident to youth particularly, there are none which either deform its present appearance, or blast the prospect of its future prosperity more than these. By checking its natural progress in improvement, they fix it in long immaturity, and frequently produce mischiefs, which can never be repaired.

These are the vices too commonly found among the young.—Big with enterprize, and elated by hope, they resolve to trust for success
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to none but themselves.—Full of their own abilities, they deride the admonitions which are given them by their friends, as the timorous suggestions of age.—Too wise to learn,—too impatient to deliberate,—too forward to be restrained, they plunge with precipitate indiscretion into the midst of all the dangers with which life abounds.—Positive in opinion, and confident in their assertions, as they are at this period, the time will arrive when both men and things will appear in a different light. Many characters now admired will sink, by and by, in esteem;—and many opinions, of which they are at present most tenacious, will alter as they advance in years.

The glare of youthful Presumption which dazzles our eyes should always be distrusted; we should not abound in our own sense, nor put ourselves forward with too much eagerness; nor imagine that by the impetuosity of juvenile ardour, systems can be overturned which have been long established, or that the face of the world can be changed; but by patient and gradual progression in improvement, we may in due time command lasting esteem. But by assuming, at present, a tone of superiority to which we have no title, we shall disgust those whose approbation it is most important to gain. Forward vivacity may fit us,

to be the companions of an idle hour. More solid qualities must recommend us to the wise, and mark us out for importance and consideration in subsequent life.

DISSAPPOINTED PRIDE.

WHEN a man's sufferings arise from the bad dispositions of his own heart ; when in the height of prosperity he is rendered miserable solely by disappointed pride, every ordinary motive for communication ceases. The violence of anguish drives him to confess a passion which renders him odious, and a weakness which renders him despicable.

In the eye of his family, every man wishes to appear respectable, and to cover from their knowledge whatever may vilify or degrade him. Attacked or reproached abroad, he consoles himself with his importance at home ; and in domestic attachment and respect, seeks for some compensation for the injustice of the world. But the torments this folly occasions force him to break through all restraints, and publish his shame before those from whom all men seek most to hide it.

PRIN-

PRINCIPLE AND SENTIMENT CONTRASTED.

SENTIMENT and Principle are often mistaken for each other; though in fact they widely differ.—Sentiment is the virtue of ideas, and Principle the virtue of action.—Sentiment has its seat in the head, Principle in the heart.—Sentiment suggests fine harangues, and subtle distinctions; Principle conceives just notions, and performs good actions in consequence of them.—Sentiment refines away the simplicity of truth, and the plainness of piety; and, as Voltaire, that celebrated wit, has remarked of his no less celebrated contemporary Rousseau, “gives us virtue in words and vice in deeds.”—Sentiment may be called the Athenian, who *knew* what was right; and Principle the Lacedemonian, who *practised* it.

These qualities may be exemplified from considering two characters beautifully drawn by the admirable pen of Milton.—Belial, who may be called, and not improperly, the Demon of sentiment; and Abdiel, the Angel of principle.

BELIAL.

BELIAL.

A fairer person lost not heaven ; he seem'd
 For dignity compos'd, and high exploit,
 But all was false and hollow, tho' his tongue
 Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear
 The better reason, to perplex and dash
 Maturest counsels ; for his thoughts were low,
 To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
 Tim'rous and slothful ; yet he pleas'd the ear.

ABDIEL.

————— Faithful found
 Among the faithless, faithful only he
 Among innumerable false, unmoved,
 Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified ;
 His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal
 Nor number, nor example with him wrought
 To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
 Tho' single. —

PROSPERITY.

A SINGLE disappointment is sufficient to
 embitter all the pleasures of worldly pro-
 sperity. Though it might be expected, one in
 posses-

possession of high power and station should disregard slight injuries. But prosperity debilitates, instead of strengthening the mind. Its common effect is, to create an extreme sensibility to the slightest wound. It foment's impatient desires; and raises expectations which no success can satisfy. It fosters a false delicacy, which sickens in the midst of indulgence;—by repeated gratification, it blunts the feelings of men to what is pleasing; and leaves them unhappily acute to whatever is uneasy.

NECESSITY OF PRUDENCE IN EVERY STAGE OF LIFE.

AT the first setting out in life, especially when yet unacquainted with the world and its snares, when every pleasure enchants with its smile, and every object shines with the gloss of novelty, youth should beware of the seducing appearances which surround them; and recollect what others have suffered from the power of headstrong desire. If any passion be allowed, even though it should be esteemed innocent, to acquire an absolute ascendant, their inward peace will be impaired. But if any, which has the taint of guilt,

guilt, they may date from that moment the ruin of their tranquillity.

Nor with the season of youth does the peril end. To the impetuosity of youthful desire, succeed the more sober, but no less dangerous attachments of advancing years; when the passions which are connected with interest and ambition begin their reign, and too frequently extend their influence, even over those periods of life which ought to be the most tranquil.

From the first to the last of man's abode on earth, the discipline must never be relaxed of guarding the heart from the dominion of passion. Eager passions and violent desires were not made for man.—They exceed his sphere.—They find no adequate object on earth; and, of course, can be productive of nothing but misery.

The certain consequence of indulging them is, that there shall come an evil day, when the anguish of disappointment shall acknowledge that all which we enjoy availeth us nothing.

REDEMPTION.

THIS is one of the most glorious works of the Almighty—illustrious is the hour of the restoration of the world—the hour when from condemnation and misery, it emerged into happiness and peace.

In this hour, the long series of prophecies, visions, types, and figures, was accomplished. This was the center in which they all met;—this the point to which they tended and verged, throughout the course of so many generations. We behold the law and the prophets standing at the foot of the cross, and doing homage. We behold Moses and Aaron bearing the ark of the covenant;—David and Elijah presenting the oracle of testimony;—we behold all the priests and sacrifices, —all the rights and ordinances,—all the types and symbols, assembled together to receive their consummation. In this hour every rite assumed its significancy;—every prediction met its event;—every symbol displayed its correspondence.

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REFORMATION.

THE rage for reformation commonly shews itself in a violent zeal for suppressing what is wrong, rather than in a prudent attention to establish what is right; but we shall never obtain a fair garden merely by rooting up weeds; we must also plant flowers; for the natural richness of the soil we have been clearing will not suffer it to lie barren, but whether it sh^{all} be vainly or beneficially prolific, depends on the culture.

RELIGION.

THE spirit of true religion breathes gentleness and affability. It gives a native unaffected ease to the behaviour. It is social, kind, and cheerful;—far removed from that gloomy and illiberal superstition which clouds the brow, sharpens the temper, dejects the spirit, and teaches men to fit themselves for another world, by neglecting the concerns of this.

On the contrary, religion connects our preparation for Heaven, with an honourable discharge of the duties of active life. It is associated in

the imagination with all that is lovely and useful,—with whatsoever things are true, are just, are pure, are lovely, are of good report,—wherever there is any virtue,—and wherever there is any praise.

Religion is rather a matter of sentiment than reasoning. The important and interesting articles of faith are sufficiently plain. Our attention should be fixed on these, and not suffered to meddle with controversy. For there we are plunged into a chaos, from which we never shall be able to extricate ourselves. It spoils the temper, and has no good effect on the heart.

All books, and all conversation, that tend to shake our faith on those great points of religion which should serve to regulate our conduct, and on which our hopes of future and eternal happiness depend, should be avoided.

We should never indulge ourselves in ridicule on religious subjects, nor give countenance to it in others, by seeming diverted with what they say. This, to people of good breeding, will be a sufficient check. It is not necessary to go further than scripture for our religious opinions.

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We should embrace those we find clearly revealed, and never perplex ourselves about such as we do not understand, but treat them with silence and becoming reverence.

RELIGIOUS REFLECTION.

IF there be any impression which man is formed by nature to receive, it is religion. As soon as his mind opens to observation he discerns innumerable marks of his dependent state;—he finds himself placed, by some superior power, in a vast world, where the wisdom and goodness of the Creator are conspicuous on every side.

The magnificence, the beauty, the order of nature, excite him to admire and adore. When he looks up to the omnipotent hand which operates throughout the universe, he is impressed with reverence!—when he receives blessings which he cannot avoid ascribing to divine goodness, he is prompted to gratitude.

Tribes of men, without policy or laws, or cities, or any of the arts of life, are discovered; but no where without some form of religion. In

every region we behold the prostrate worshipper, the temple, the altar, and the offering.

RESIGNATION.

IGNORANCE of good or evil should determine man to follow providence, and resign himself to God. Resignation to his Maker is one of the most important lessons which can be given to man. He knows not what is good for himself in the future periods of life; but God perfectly knows it; and if he faithfully serves him, he has reason to believe that God will always consult it. Before him lies the whole succession of events, which are to fill up man's existence. It is in his power to arrange, and model them at his pleasure.

Amidst the agitations of desire, and the perplexities of doubt, there is one fixed point of rest. By this let man abide; and dismiss his anxiety about things uncertain and unknown. He should acquire an interest in divine favour; and he may safely surrender himself to the divine administration. When tempted to repine at his condition, he should reflect whether he would have been happier in any other station.

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He should not be too particular in his petitions to heaven concerning his temporal interest, but suffer God to govern the world according to his own plan; and only pray, that he would bestow what his unerring wisdom sees to be best for him. On the whole he should follow wherever his providence leads; comply with whatever he requires, and leave all the rest to him.

SELF COMMUNION,

AS recommended by men of virtue and true piety, is religious recollection. It is to commune with ourselves, under the character of spiritual and immortal beings; and to ponder those paths of our feet which are leading us to eternity.—It is to bring home to our souls the internal, authoritative sense of God, as of a sovereign and a father; to contemplate what is displayed of his perfections.—It is to realize the presence of the Supreme Being, so as to produce the most profound veneration, and to awaken the earnest desire of as near an approach, as our nature will permit, to that great fountain of happiness and life.

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By this the pious man walks among the various scenes of nature as within the precincts of a great temple, in the habitual exercise of devotion. And from hence, when his thoughts have been thus employed, he returns to the world like a superior being. He carries into active life those pure and elevating sentiments, to which the giddy crowd are strangers. A certain odour of sanctity remains upon his mind, which, for a while at least, will repel the contagion of the world.

As he views the world with the eye of a Christian, he will see, that however men appear to move and act after their own pleasure, they are nevertheless retained in secret bonds by the Almighty; and all their operations rendered subservient to the ends of his moral government. He will behold him punishing the sinner by means of his own iniquities; from the trials of the righteous bringing forth their reward; and to a state of seeming universal confusion preparing the wisest and most equitable issue.—While the fashion of this world is passing fast away, he will discern the glory of another arising fast to succeed it.—He will behold all human events; our grief and our joys—our love and hatred—our character and our memory, absorbed in the ocean of eternity; and no traces of our present existence left, except
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its being for ever well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked.

SINCERITY.

SINCERITY is the basis of every virtue. The love of truth, as we value the approbation of heaven, or the esteem of the world, should be cultivated. In all our proceedings it will make us direct and consistent. Ingenuity and candour possess the most powerful charm; they bespeak universal favour, and carry an apology for almost every failing.

The path of truth is a plain and safe path.—It supplies us with an openness of character which displays a generous boldness, necessary to distinguish youth. To give an early preference to honour above gain when they stand in competition;—to despise every advantage, which cannot be attained without dishonest arts;—to brook no meanness, and stoop to no dissimulation, are the indications of a great mind, the presages of future eminence and distinction in life.

At the same time, this virtuous sincerity is perfectly consistent with the most prudent vigilance

lance and caution. It is opposed to cunning, not to true wisdom. It is not the simplicity of the weak and improvident, but the candour of an enlarged and noble mind; of one who scorns deceit, because he accounts it both base and unprofitable; and who seeks no disguise, because he needs none to hide him.

SLOTH.

NOTHING is so opposite to the true enjoyment of life, as the relaxed and feeble state of an indolent mind. Sloth is so inconsistent with both soundness of mind and body, that it is harder to determine whether it be a greater foe to virtue, or to health and happiness. Inactive as it is in itself, its effects are fatally powerful. Though it appear a slowly flowing stream, yet it undermines all that is stable and flourishing. It not only saps the foundation of every virtue, but pours upon us a deluge of crimes and evils.—It is like water, which first putrifies by stagnation; and then sends up noxious vapours, and fills the atmosphere with death.

Idleness is the certain parent both of guilt and ruin, which should be avoided. Under this are included,

included, not mere inaction only, but all that circle of trifling occupations, in which too many saunter away their youth; perpetually engaged in frivolous society or public amusements;—in the labour of dress, or the ostentation of their persons.

Amusements, youth requires. It were vain—it were cruel, to prohibit them. But though allowable as the relaxation, they are most culpable as the business of the young. For they then become the gulph of time, and the poison of the mind.—They foment bad passions—they weaken the manly powers—they sink the native vigour of youth into contemptible effeminacy.

SOBRIETY OF MIND—ITS NECESSITY.

SOBRIETY of mind is one of those virtues, which the present condition of human life strongly inculcates. The uncertainty of its enjoyments checks presumption; the multiplicity of its dangers demands perpetual caution.

Moderation—vigilance—and self-government, are duties incumbent on all; but especially on such as are beginning the journey of life. For the whole state of youthful views and passions is ad-

verse to sobriety of mind.—The scenes which present themselves at our entering upon the world, are commonly flattering.—Whatever they be in themselves, the lively spirits of the young gild every opening prospect.—The field of hope appears to stretch wide before them. Pleasure seems to put forth its blossoms on every side.—Impelled by desire, forward they rush with inconsiderate ardour:—prompt to decide and to chuse—averse to hesitate or to enquire;—credulous, because untaught by experience;—rash, because unacquainted with danger;—headstrong, because unsubdued by disappointment.

In human actions there is a right and wrong.—Those who are born with the same advantages of fortune, are not all equally prosperous in the course of life.—Some of them, by wise and steady conduct, attain distinction in the world, and pass their days with comfort and honour;—others of the same rank, by mean and vicious behaviour, forfeit the advantages of their birth,—involve themselves in much misery,—and end in being a disgrace to their friends, and a burden on society. Early, then, we may learn, that it is not on the external condition in which we find ourselves placed;—but on that part on which we are to act, that our welfare or unhappiness,—our honour or infamy depend.

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When beginning to act that part, it is of the greatest moment to regulate our plan of conduct with the most serious attention, before we have yet committed any fatal or irretrievable errors.—If, instead of exerting reflection for this valuable purpose, we deliver ourselves up, at so critical a time, to sloth and pleasure;—if we refuse to listen to any counsellor but humour, or to attend to any pursuit except that of amusement;—if we allow ourselves to float loose and careless on the tide of life, ready to receive any direction which the current of fashion may chance to give us—the sad consequences of such indiscretion will extend to us:—we cannot attain success without preparation, and escape dangers without precaution.—Happiness will not grow up to us of its own accord, and solicit our acceptance, when to the rest of mankind, it is the fruit of long cultivation, and the acquisition of labour and care.—We should not deceive ourselves with such arrogant hopes.

Whatever be our rank, Providence will not, for our sakes, reverse its established order. But, by tempering the vivacity of youth with a proper mixture of serious thought, we may ensure cheerfulness for the rest of life; whilst by delivering ourselves up at present to giddiness and levity, we lay the foundation of lasting heaviness of heart.

SOLITUDE.

SOLITUDE is the hallowed ground which religion hath, in every age, chosen for her own. There her inspiration is felt, and her secret mysteries elevate the soul. There falls the tear of contrition ;—there, rises towards heaven the sigh of the heart ;—there, melts the soul with all the tenderness of devotion, and pours itself forth before him who made, and redeemed it.

The great and worthy, the pious and the virtuous, have ever been addicted to serious retirement. Refined and enlarged minds leave the world behind them,—feel a call for higher pleasures,—and seek them in retreat.

But a total seclusion from the world, is so far from being the perfection of religion, that it is no other than the abuse of it. Yet there will be neither consistency in the conduct, nor dignity in the character, of one who sets apart no share of time for meditation and reflection.

If we wish that reason should exert her native power, we must step aside from the crowd into the cool and silent shade. It is there that, with sober and steady eye, she examines what is good
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and evil, what is wise or foolish, in human conduct ;—she looks back on the past, and forms plans, not for the present moment only, but for the whole of life.

Man cannot discharge any part of his duty aright, who never suffers his passions to cool—and his passions cannot cool, who is engaged without interruption in the tumult of the world. This incessant stir may be called the perpetual drunkenness of life. It raises that eager fermentation of spirit, which will ever be sending forth the dangerous fumes of rashness and folly.

Whereas, he who mingles religious retreat with worldly affairs, remains calm and master of himself—he is not whirled round, and rendered giddy by the agitation of the world, but comes forth with manly tranquillity, fortified by principles which he has formed, and prepared for whatever may befall. For he who wishes for an effectual cure of the wounds which the world can inflict, should retire from intercourse with men, to intercourse with God. When he enters into his closet, and shuts the door, let him shut out at the same time all intrusion of worldly care, and dwell among objects divine and immortal : for celestial inhabitants quarrel not. Amongst them there is neither ingratitude, nor envy, nor

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tumult ; concord and tranquillity reign for ever. From such objects, upon the mind of the pious man, there beams a pure and enlivening light ; there is diffused over his heart a holy calm.—His agitated spirit reassumes its firmness, and regains its peace.—The world sinks in its importance, and the load of mortality and misery loses almost all its weight. The disturbances and alarms, so formidable to those who are engaged in the tumults of the world, seem to him like thunder only rolling afar off.

Besides, it is also necessary to prepare us for a life to come. For breathing habitually a contagious air, how certain is our ruin, unless we sometimes retreat from this pestilential region, and seek for proper correctives of the disorders which are contracted there?—Religious retirement both abates the disease, and furnishes the remedy. It lessens the corrupting influence of the world ; and it gives opportunity for better principles to exert their power.

THE STUDY OF MAN.

THE life of man is a mixed state, full of uncertainty and vicissitude, of anxieties and fears. For no man's prosperity on earth is stable
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and assured—hence no study, to a thoughtful mind, can appear more important than how to be suitably prepared for the misfortunes of life, so as to contemplate them in prospect without dismay; and, if they must befall, to bear them without dejection.

Throughout every age, power has endeavoured to remove adversity to a distance. Philosophy has studied when it drew nigh, to conquer it by patience—and wealth has sought out every pleasure that can compensate or alleviate pain.

But religion has been no less attentive to the same important object. The defence which it provides is altogether of an internal kind. It is the heart, not the outward state, which it professes to guard, by affording the distressed that security and peace, which arise from a belief of divine protection. It opens to them sources of consolation which are hidden from others. By that strength of mind with which it endows them, it sets them upon a rock, against which the tempest may violently beat, but cannot shake; for it prepares the mind for encountering with fortitude the most severe shocks of adversity.

PASSIVE TAMENESS OF SPIRIT, AND
UNLIMITED COMPLIANCE.

PASSIVE tameness, which submits without struggle to every encroachment of the violent and assuming, forms no part of Christian duty, but is destructive of general happiness and order.

Unlimited complaisance which, on every occasion, falls in with the opinions and manners of others, is so far from being a virtue, that it is itself a vice, and the parent of many vices.—It overthrows all steadiness of principle, and produces that sinful conformity with the world, which taints the whole character.

In the present corrupted state of human manners, always to assent and to comply, is the very worst maxim which can be adopted. It is impossible to support the purity and dignity of Christian morals, without opposing the world on various occasions, even though we should stand alone.

TEMPERANCE.

TEMPERANCE in pleasure is essentially necessary to be observed, particularly by youth, that they may beware of that rock on which thousands, from race to race, continue to split. The love of pleasure, natural to man in every period of his life, glows at this age with excessive ardour.—Novelty adds fresh charms, as yet, to every gratification.—The world appears to spread a continual feast;—and health, vigour, and high spirits invite them to partake of it without restraint. In vain are they warned of the latent danger. The old, when they offer their admonitions, are upbraided with having forgot that they once were young. And yet, to what do the counsels of age, with respect to pleasure, amount? They may all be comprised in a few words, not to hurt ourselves, and not to hurt others by our pursuit of pleasure, and those will be fully effected by temperance. Within these bounds, pleasure is lawful, beyond them it becomes criminal, because it is ruinous.

Hence by this virtue we are not called to renounce pleasure, but to enjoy it in safety.—Instead of abridging it, we are exhorted to pursue it

it on an extensive plan; we have measures proposed for securing its possession, and for prolonging its duration.—As we consider ourselves not only as sensitive, but as rational beings;—not only as rational but social:—not only as social but immortal; whatever violates our nature in any of these respects cannot afford true pleasure.

Have we not found that in the course of criminal excess, pleasure was more than compensated by succeeding pain? Have we not from every habit, at least of unlawful gratification, found some thorn spring to wound us; some consequence to make us repent of it in the issue? We should therefore avoid temptations, for which we have found ourselves unequal, with as much care as we would shun pestilential infection.

GOOD TEMPER—ITS EFFECTS AND UTILITY.

A Good-natured man, whatever faults he may have, they will for the most part be treated with lenity;—he will generally find an advocate in every human heart;—his errors will be lamented, rather than abhorred;—and his virtues will be viewed in the fairest point of light:—His good humour, without the help of great talents or acquirements,

quirements, will make his company preferable to that of the most brilliant genius, in whom this quality is wanting—but with it such a brightness will be added to their lustre, that all the world will envy and admire, whilst his associates will almost adore, and labour to imitate him.—In short, it is almost impossible that we can be sincerely beloved by any body, without this engaging property, whatever other excellencies we may possess;—but with it, we shall scarcely fail of finding some friends and favours, even though we should be destitute of almost every other advantage.

It is true we are not all equally happy in our dispositions; but human virtue consists in cherishing and cultivating every good inclination, and in checking and subduing every propensity to evil.—If a man had been born with a bad temper, it might have been made a good one, at least with regard to its outward effects, by education, reason and principle: and though he is so happy as to have a good one while young, he must not suppose it will always continue so, if he neglects to maintain a proper command over it.—Power—sickness—disappointments—or worldly cares may corrupt, or embitter the finest disposition, if they are not counteracted by reason and religion.—Hence these should be ever exerted in the exigencies

cies of life—they will teach us a becoming submission under all the accidents of our mortal state, with which it is so variously chequered:—divest calamity of its severest sting—make our enemies ashamed of their persecuting spirit—and cause us to smile even in the midst of misfortune.

By good temper is not meant an insensible indifference to injuries—and a total forbearance from manly resentment.—There is a noble and generous kind of anger, a proper and necessary part of our nature which has nothing in it sinful or degrading—We are not to be dead to this—for the person, who feels not an injury, must be incapable of being properly affected by benefits. With those, who treat us ill without provocation, we ought to maintain our own dignity—but whilst we shew a sense of their improper behaviour, we must preserve calmness, and even good breeding—and thereby convince them of the impotence, as well as injustice of their malice.

Generous anger does not preclude esteem for whatever is really estimable, nor does it destroy good-will to the person of its object, or authorize any impeachment to rest on the goodness of our disposition:—It even inspires the desire of overcoming our enemy by benefits—and wishes to inflict no other punishment than the regret of having

having injured one who deserved his kindness:— It is always placable, and ready to be reconciled, as soon as the offender is convinced of his error; nor can any subsequent injury provoke it to recur to past disobligations, which had been once forgiven. The consciousness of injured innocence naturally produces dignity, and usually prevents anger;—but if tempered with the calmness of a quiet spirit, it ever rises superior to the oppressive hand of insolence and cruelty.

EFFECTS OF VICE.

VICE by its natural influence on the temper tends to produce dejection under the slightest trials, and weakens that which only can support mankind when those vicissitudes come—For it is their mind which must then support them; and their mind, by their sensual attachments, is corrupted and enfeebled—so that they have neither principles, nor temper, which can stand the assault of trouble.

They have no principles which lead them to look beyond the ordinary rotation of events—and therefore, when misfortunes involve them, the prospect must be comfortless on every side.

Strangers

—Strangers to all the temperate satisfactions of a good and pure mind—Strangers to every pleasure, except what was seasoned by vice or vanity, their adversity is to the last degree disconsolate—From hence we may deduce the causes to which we must ascribe the broken spirits—the peevish temper—and impatient passions that so often attend the declining age, or falling fortunes of vicious men.

VILLAIN.

HE climbs the steep rock, and treads on the edge of a precipice, in order to catch a shadow—He has cause to dread not only the uncertainty of the event which he wishes to accomplish, but the nature also of that event when accomplished—He is not only liable to that disappointment of success, which so often frustrates all designs of men; but liable to a disappointment still more cruel, that of being successful and miserable at once.

Riches and pleasure are the chief temptations to criminal deeds. Yet those riches, when obtained, may very possibly overwhelm him with unforeseen miseries. Those pleasures may cut
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short his health and life—And is it for such doubtful and fallacious rewards, that the deceiver fills his mouth with lies, the friend betrays his benefactor, the apostate renounces his faith, and the assassin covers himself with blood!

Whoever commits a crime, incurs a certain evil for a most uncertain good—What will turn to his advantage in the course of this life, he cannot with any assurance know;—but this he may know, with full certainty, that he will draw upon his head that displeasure of the Almighty, which shall crush him for ever.

The advantages of this world when obtained by criminal means carry a curse in their bosom, nay even when innocently gained, are uncertain blessings. To the virtuous, they are often no more than chaff—to the guilty they are always poison.

VIRTUE AND PROSPERITY CONTRASTED.

THOSE situations which favour pleasure are too generally adverse to virtue. Virtue requires internal government and discipline; prosperity relaxes the mind, and inflames the passions:

sions:—virtue is supported by a regard to what is future—prosperity attaches us wholly to what is present:—virtue checks our pursuits, which are the result of intemperance—refrains our desires, and makes them flow in the calm tide of moderation:—prosperity encreases our evil propensities, inflames our passions, and plunges us deep in the stream of riot and excess:—virtue is the sovereign pilot which steers us into the harbour of true lasting pleasure—prosperity is too apt to turn the helm to the port of sensual enjoyment—unites us too closely to the things of this world—and makes us eye the moment of our dissolution with regret and horror. The characteristics of virtue are modesty and humility—the most common attendants upon prosperity are pride and presumption; and often prove the motive of impiety.

VIRTUE

IS the universal charm: even its shadow is courted, when the substance is wanting.—It must be formed and supported, not by unfrequent acts, but by daily and repeated exertions, in order to its becoming vigorous and useful. Great events give scope for great virtues; but the main tenor of human life is composed of small occurrences—
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Within the round of these, lie the materials of the happiness of most men; the subjects of their duty, and the trials of their virtue.

Whatever is to be our profession, no education is more necessary to success, than the acquirement of virtuous dispositions and habits. This is the universal preparation for every character, and every station in life—Bad as the world is, respect is always paid to virtue. In the usual course of human affairs, it will be found that a plain understanding, joined with acknowledged worth, contributes more to prosperity than the brightest parts without probity or honour.

Whether science, or business, or public life, be our aim, virtue still enters, for a principal share, into all those great departments of society.

It is connected with eminence in every liberal art;—with reputation in every branch of fair and useful business;—with distinction, in every public station. The vigour which it gives to the mind, and the weight which it adds to the character;—the generous sentiment which it breathes;—the undaunted spirit which it inspires;—the ardour of diligence which it quickens;—the freedom which it procures from pernicious and dishonourable

avocations, are the foundation of all that is high in fame, or great in success among men.

Whatever ornamental or engaging endowments we possess, virtue is a necessary requisite in order to their shining with proper lustre—By whatever arts we may at first attract the attention, we can hold the esteem, and secure the hearts of others, only by amiable dispositions, and the accomplishments of the mind—These are the qualities whose influence will last, when the lustre of all that once sparkled and dazzled has passed away.

VOLUPTUARY.

THE corrupted temper, and the guilty passions of the bad, frustrate the effect of every advantage which the world confers on them—The world may call them men of pleasure; but of all men they are the greatest foes to pleasure: from their eagerness to grasp, they strangle and destroy it—riotous indulgence enervates both the body and the mind: so that in the midst of his studied refinement the voluptuary languishes.

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Wherever guilt mingles with prosperity, a certain gloom and heaviness enter along with it. Vicious intrigues never fail to entangle and embarrass those who engage in them;—besides, the selfish gratifications of the bad are both narrow in their circle, and short in their duration.

WORLD.

THE world is the great deceiver, whose fallacious arts it highly imports us to detect. But in the midst of its pleasures and pursuits, the detection is impossible. We tread as within an enchanted circle, where nothing appears as it truly is. We live in delusion, forming plans of imaginary bliss. We wander for ever in the paradise of fools—meditating in secret on the means of attaining worldly success;—which acquired, has seldom in one instance fulfilled our expectation;—but where we have reckoned most upon enjoyment, there have we generally found the least.

It is too often considered as the only field of pleasure; and beat over and over in quest of joys unsubstantial and transitory:—Pleased with the visionary trifles which it affords, we forget the

probationary state of our existence,—madly pursue what at best we cannot retain—barter our eternal welfare for vain shadows and empty shew ;—and, as if careless of the justice of God, seem to regard not his threatened vengeance, but depend solely on the extent of his mercy ; and divest ourselves of the smallest right to demand our promised felicity.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

THE expressions of those affections under its various forms, are no other than native effusions of the human heart. Ignorance may mislead, and superstition may corrupt them, but their origin are derived from sentiments that are essential to man.

Wherever men have existed, they have been sensible that some acknowledgment was due, on their part, to the Sovereign of the world ; which Christian revelation has placed in such a light, as one should think were sufficient to over-awe the most thoughtless, and to melt the most obdurate mind.

But religious worship, disjoined from justice and virtue, can on no account whatever find accept-

acceptance with the Supreme Being.—Because it is for the sake of man that worship and prayers are required, that he may be rendered better, and acquire those pious and virtuous dispositions, in which his highest improvement consists.

YOUTH.

YOUTH is the season of warm and generous emotions;—the heart should then spontaneously rise into the admiration of what is great, glow with the love of what is fair and excellent, and melt at the discovery of tenderness and goodness.—In this season we should endeavour, upon rational and sober enquiry, to have our principles established, nor suffer them to be shaken by the scoffs of the licentious, or the cavils of the sceptical.—No wantonness of youthful spirits, no compliance with the intemperate mirth of others, should ever betray us into profane sallies.

It should not be barren of improvements, so essential to future felicity and honour.

This is the seed-time of life.—The character is now under divine assistance, of our own forming; our fate is, in some measure, put into our own

own hands.—Nature is as yet pliant and soft—habits have not established their dominion—prejudices have not pre-occupied our understanding—the world has not had time to contract and debase our affections—All our powers are more vigorous, disembarassed and free, than they will be at any future period. Whatever impulse we now give to our desires and passions, the direction is likely to continue.—It will form the channel in which our life is to run; nay, it may determine its everlasting issue.

Virtuous youth gradually brings forward accomplished and flourishing manhood; and such manhood passes of itself, without uneasiness, into respectable and tranquil old age.—But if youth be trifled away without improvement, manhood will be contemptible, and old age miserable.—If the beginning of life has been vanity, its latter end can be no other than vexation of spirit.

TRUE HONOUR.

THE proper honour of man arises not from those splendid actions and abilities which excite high admiration. Courage and prowess, military renown, signal victories and conquests, may render

render the name of a man famous, without rendering his character truly honourable. To many brave men, to many heroes renowned in story, we look up with wonder. Their exploits are recorded. Their praises are sung. They stand as on an eminence, above the rest of mankind. Their eminence, nevertheless, may not be of that sort before which we bow with inward esteem and respect. Something more is wanted for that purpose, than the conquering arm, and the intrepid mind. The laurels of the warrior must at all times be dyed in blood, and bedewed with the tears of the widow and the orphan. But if they have been stained by rapine and inhumanity; if sordid avarice has marked his character; or low and gross sensuality has degraded his life; the great hero sinks into a little man. What at a distance, or on a superficial view, we admire, becomes mean, perhaps odious, when we examine it more closely. It is like the Colossal statue, whose immense size struck the spectator afar off with astonishment; but, when nearly viewed, it appears disproportioned, unshapely, and rude.

Observations of the same kind may be applied to all the reputation derived from civil accomplishments; from the refined politics of the statesman, or the literary efforts of genius and erudition. These bestow, and, within certain bounds, ought to

to bestow, eminence and distinction on men. They discover talents which in themselves are shining; and which become highly valuable, when employed in advancing the good of mankind. Hence, they frequently give rise to fame. But a distinction is to be made between fame and true honour. The former is a loud and noisy applause; the latter, a more silent and internal homage. Fame floats on the breath of the multitude; Honour rests on the judgment of the thinking. Fame may give praise while it withholds esteem: True honour implies esteem mingled with respect. The one regards particular distinguished talents; the other looks up to the whole character. Hence the statesman, the orator, or the poet, may be famous, while yet the man himself is far from being honoured. We envy his abilities. We wish to rival them. But we would not chuse to be classed with him who possessed them.

From all this it follows, that in order to discern where man's true honour lies, we must look, not to any single adventitious circumstance of fortune; not to any sparkling quality; but to the whole of what forms a man; what entitles him, as such, to rank high among the class of beings to which he belongs; in a word, we must look to the mind and the soul. A mind superior to fear, to selfish interest

interest and corruption ; a mind governed by the principles of uniform rectitude and integrity ; the same in prosperity and adversity ; which no bribe can seduce, nor terror overawe ; neither by pleasure melted into effeminacy, nor by distress sunk into dejection ; such is the mind which forms the distinction and eminence of men.—One, who in no situation of life is either ashamed or afraid of discharging his duty, and acting his proper part with firmness and constancy ; true to the God whom he worships, and true to the faith in which he professes to believe ; full of affection to his brethren of mankind ; faithful to his friends, generous to his enemies, warm with compassion to the unfortunate ; self-denying to little private interests and pleasures, but zealous for public interest and happiness ; magnanimous, without being proud ; humble, without being mean ; just, without being harsh ; simple in his manners, but manly in his feelings ; on whose word you can entirely rely ; whose countenance never deceives you ; whose professions of kindness are the effusions of his heart ; one, in fine, whom, independent of any views of advantage, you would choose for a superior, could trust in as a friend, and could love as a brother :—This is the man, whom in your heart, above all others, you do, you must, honour.

TRUE RELIGION.

FALSE ideas may be entertained of religion; as false and imperfect conceptions of virtue have often prevailed in the world. But to true religion there belongs no fullen gloom; no melancholy austerity, tending to withdraw men from human society, or to diminish the exertions of active virtue. On the contrary, the religious principle, rightly understood, not only unites with all such virtues, but supports, fortifies, and confirms them. It is so far from obscuring the lustre of a character, that it heightens and ennobles it. It adds to all the moral virtues a venerable and authoritative dignity. It renders the virtuous character more august. To the decorations of a palace, it joins the majesty of a temple.

SENSIBILITY.

TO him who is prompted by virtuous sensibility, every office of beneficence and humanity is a pleasure. He gives, assists, and relieves, not merely because he is bound to do so,
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but because it would be painful for him to refrain. Hence, the smallest benefit he confers rises in its value, on account of its carrying the affection of the giver impressed upon the gift. It speaks his heart; and the discovery of the heart is very frequently of greater consequence than all that liberality can bestow. How often will the affectionate smile of approbation gladden the humble, and raise the dejected! How often will the look of tender sympathy, or the tear that involuntarily falls, impart consolation to the unhappy! By means of this correspondence of hearts, all the great duties which we owe to one another are both performed to more advantage, and endeared in the performance. From true sensibility flow a thousand good offices, apparently small in themselves, but of high importance to the felicity of others; offices which altogether escape the observation of the cold and unfeeling, who, by the hardness of their manner, render themselves unamiable, even when they mean to do good.—How happy then would it be for mankind, if this affectionate disposition prevailed more generally in the world! How much would the sum of public virtue and public felicity be increased, if men were always inclined to *rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep!*

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But, besides the effect of such a temper on general virtue and happiness, let us consider its effect on the happiness of him who possesses it, and the various pleasures to which it gives him access. If he be master of riches or influence, it affords him the means of increasing his own enjoyment, by relieving the wants, or increasing the comforts of others. If he command not these advantages, yet all the comforts which he sees in the possession of the deserving, become in some sort his, by his rejoicing in the good which they enjoy. Even the face of nature yields a satisfaction to him which the insensible can never know. The profusion of goodness which he beholds poured forth on the universe, dilates his heart with the thought that innumerable multitudes around him are blest and happy. When he sees the labours of men appearing to prosper, and views a country flourishing in wealth and industry; when he beholds the spring coming forth in its beauty, and reviving the decayed face of nature; or in autumn beholds the fields loaded with plenty, and the year crowned with all its fruits; he lifts his affections with gratitude to the great Father of all, and rejoices in the general felicity and joy.

FALSE SENSIBILITY.

SOFTNESS of manners must not be mistaken for true sensibility. Sensibility indeed tends to produce gentleness in behaviour; and when such behaviour flows from native affection, it is valuable and amiable. But the exterior manner alone may be learned in the school of the world; and often, too often, is found to cover much unfeeling hardness of heart. Professions of sensibility on every trifling occasion, joined with the appearance of excessive softness, and a profusion of sentimental language, afford always much ground for distrust. They create the suspicion of a studied character. Frequently, under a negligent and seemingly rough manner, there lies a tender and feeling heart. Manliness and sensibility are so far from being incompatible, that the truly brave are for the most part generous and humane; while the soft and effeminate are hardly capable of any vigorous exertion of affection.

TIME.

TIME is of so great importance to mankind that it cannot too often employ religious meditation. There is nothing in the manage-

ment of which wisdom is more requisite, or where mankind display their inconsistency more. In its particular parcels, they appear entirely careless of it; and throw it away with thoughtless profusion. But, when collected into some of its great portions, and viewed as the measure of their continuance in life, they become sensible of its value, and begin to regard it with a serious eye. While day after day is wasted in a course of idleness or vicious pleasures, if some incident shall occur which leads the most inconsiderate man to think of his age, or time of life; how much of it is gone; at what period of it he is now arrived; and to what proportion of it he can with any probability look forward, as yet to come; he can hardly avoid feeling some secret compunction, and reflecting seriously upon his state. Happy, if that virtuous impression were not of momentary continuance, but retained its influence amidst the succeeding cares and pleasures of the world!

RECOLLECTION.

WHEN we recollect the several stages of life through which we have passed; the successive occupations in which we have been engaged, the designs we have formed, and the hopes

hopes and fears which alternately have filled our breast; how barren for the most part is the remembrance; and how few traces of any thing valuable or important remain! Like characters drawn on the sand, which the next wave washes totally away, so one trivial succession of events has effaced the memory of the preceding; and though we have seemed all along to be busy, yet for much of what we have acted, we are neither wiser nor better than if such actions had never been. Hence let the retrospect of what is past produce, as its first effect, humiliation in our own eyes, and abasement before God. Much do human pride and self-complacency require some correction; and that correction is never more effectually administered, than by an impartial and serious review of former life.

TIME PAST IMPROVED.

THOUGH passed time be gone, we are not to consider it as irredeemably lost. To a very profitable purpose it may yet be applied, if we lay hold of it while it remains in remembrance, and oblige it to contribute to future improvement. If you have gained nothing more by the years that are past, you have at least

gained experience ; and experience is the mother of wisdom. You have seen the weak parts of your character ; and may have discovered the chief sources of your misconduct. To these let your attention be directed ; on these, let the proper guards be set. If you have trifled long, resolve to trifle no more. If your passions have often betrayed and degraded you, study how they may be kept, in future, under better discipline. Learn, at the same time, never to trust presumptuously in your own wisdom. Humbly apply to the Author of your being, and beseech his grace to guide you safely through those slippery and dangerous paths, in which experience has shewn that you are so ready to err, and to fall.

In reviewing past life, it cannot but occur, that many things now appear of inconsiderable importance, which once occupied and attached us in the highest degree. Where are those keen competitions, those mortifying disappointments, those violent enmities, those eager pursuits, which we once thought were to last for ever, and on which we considered our whole happiness or misery as suspended ? We look back upon them now, as upon a dream which has passed away. None of those mighty consequences have followed which we had predicted. The airy fabric has vanished, and left no trace behind it. We smile
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at our former violence; and wonder how such things could have ever appeared so significant and great. We may rest assured, that what hath been shall again be. When Time shall once have laid his lenient hand on the passions and pursuits of the present moment, they too shall lose that imaginary value which heated fancy now bestows upon them. Hence, let them already begin to subside to their proper level. Let wisdom infuse a tincture of moderation into the eagerness of contest, by anticipating that period of coolness, which the lapse of time will, of itself, certainly bring.

DELAY.

NEVER delay till to-morrow, what reason and conscience tell you ought to be performed to-day. To-morrow is not yours; and though you should live to enjoy it, you must not overload it with a burden not its own. *Sufficient for the day will prove the duty thereof.*

REGU-

REGULARITY.

THE observance of order and method, is of high consequence for the improvement of present time. He who performs every employment in its due place and season, suffers no part of time to escape without profit. He multiplies his days; for he lives much in little space. Whereas he who neglects order in the arrangement of his occupations, is always losing the present in returning upon the past, and trying, in vain, to recover it when gone.

AFFECTED GAIETY.

THE affectation of youthful vanities degrades the dignity of manhood; even renders its manners less agreeable; and by awkward attempts to please, produces contempt. Cheerfulness is becoming in every age. But the proper cheerfulness of a man is as different from the levity of the boy, as the flight of the eagle is from the fluttering of a sparrow.

EMPLOY-

EMPLOYMENT.

THE wants of society call for every man's labour, and require various departments to be filled up. They require that some be appointed to rule, and others to obey; some to defend the society from danger, others to maintain its internal order and peace; some to provide the conveniencies of life, others to promote the improvement of the mind; many to work; others to contrive and direct. In short, within the sphere of society there is employment for every one; and in the course of these employments, many a moral duty is to be performed; many a religious grace to be exercised. No one is permitted to be a mere blank in the world. No rank, nor station, no dignity of birth, nor extent of possessions, exempt any man from contributing his share to public utility and good. This is the precept of God.—This is the voice of nature.—This is the just demand of the human race upon one another.

IDLE.

IDLENESS.

IDLENESS is the great corrupter of youth, and the bane and dishonour of middle age. He who, in the prime of life, finds time hang heavy on his hands, may with much reason suspect, that he has not consulted the duties which the consideration of his age imposed upon him; assuredly he has not consulted his own happiness.

DEATH.

WERE death a rare and uncommon object; were it only once in the course of a man's life, that he beheld one of his fellow-creatures carried to the grave, a solemn awe would fill him; he would stop short in the midst of his pleasures; he would even be chilled with secret horror. Such impressions, however, would prove unsuitable to the nature of our present state. When they became so strong as to render men unfit for the ordinary business of life, they would in a great measure defeat the intention of our being placed in this world. It is better ordered by the wisdom of Providence, that they should be weakened by the frequency of their recurrence; and so tempered by the mixture of other passions,

as to allow us to go on freely in acting our parts on earth.

Yet, familiar as death is now become, it ought not to pass over, as one of those common incidents which are beheld without concern, and awaken no reflection. There are many things which the funerals of our fellow-creatures are calculated to teach; and happy it were for the gay and dissipated, if they would listen more frequently to the instructions of so awful a monitor.

THE FUNERAL.

WHEN we observe the funerals that pass along the streets, or when we walk among the monuments of death, the first thing that naturally strikes us, is the undistinguishing blow, with which that common enemy levels all. We behold a great promiscuous multitude all carried to the same abode; all lodged in the same dark and silent mansions. There, mingle persons of every age and character, of every rank and condition in life; the young and the old, the poor and the rich, the gay and the grave, the renowned and the ignoble. A few weeks ago,
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most of those whom we have seen carried to the grave, walked about as we do now on the earth; enjoyed their friends, beheld the light of the sun, and were forming designs for future days. Perhaps, it is not long since they were engaged in scenes of high festivity. For them, perhaps, the cheerful company assembled; and in the midst of the circle they shone with gay and pleasing vivacity. But now—to them, all is finally closed. To them no more shall the seasons return, or the sun rise. No more shall they hear the voice of mirth, or behold the face of man. They are swept from the universe, as though they had never been. They are *carried away as with a flood: the wind has passed over them, and they are gone.*

THE TOMB.

A TOMB, it has been justly said, is a monument situated on the confines of both worlds. It, at once, presents to us the termination of the inquietudes of life, and sets before us the image of eternal rest.—*There, in the elegant expressions of Job, the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The*
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small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master. It is very remarkable, that in all languages, and among all nations, death has been described in a style of this kind; expressed by figures of speech, which convey every where the same idea of rest, or sleep, or retreat from the evils of life. Such a style perfectly agrees with the general belief of the soul's immortality; but assuredly conveys no high idea of the boasted pleasures of the world. It shews how much all mankind have felt this life to be a scene of trouble and care; and have agreed in opinion, that perfect rest is to be expected only in the grave.

THE MOURNER.

WHILE the funeral is attended by a numerous, unconcerned company, who are discoursing to one another about the news of the day, or the ordinary affairs of life, let our thoughts rather follow to the house of mourning, and represent to themselves what is going on there. There, we should see a disconsolate family, sitting in silent grief, thinking of the sad breach that is made in their little society; and with tears in their eyes, looking to the chamber that is now left vacant, and to every memorial that presents

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itself of their departed friend. By such attention to the woes of others, the selfish hardness of our hearts will be gradually softened, and melted down into humanity.

GRIEF.

LET moderation temper the grief of a good man and a Christian. He must not *sorrow like those who have no hope*. As high elevation of spirits befits not the joys, so continued and overwhelming dejection suits not the griefs of this transitory world. Grief, when it goes beyond certain bounds, becomes unmanly; when it lasts beyond a certain time, becomes unseasonable.—Let him not reject the alleviation which time brings to all the wounds of the heart, but suffer excessive grief to subside, by degrees, into a tender and affectionate remembrance. Let him consider, that it is in the power of Providence to raise him up other comforts in the place of those he has lost. Or, if his mind, at present, reject the thoughts of such consolation, let it turn for relief, to the prospect of a future meeting in a happier world. This is indeed the chief soother of affliction—the most powerful balm of the bleeding heart. It assists us to view death, as no
more

more than a temporary separation from friends. They whom we have loved, still live, though not present to us. They are only removed into a different mansion in the house of the common father. The toils of their pilgrimage are finished; and they are gone to the land of rest and peace. they are gone from this dark and troubled world, to join the great assembly of the just; and to dwell in the midst of everlasting light. In due time we hope to be associated with them in these blissful habitations. Until this season of re-union arrive, no principle of religion discourages our holding correspondence of affection with them by means of faith and hope.

FORGIVENESS.

IS there a man who, if he were admitted to stand by the death-bed of his bitterest enemy, and beheld him enduring that conflict which human nature must suffer at the last, would not be inclined to stretch forth the hand of friendship, to utter the voice of forgiveness, and to wish for perfect reconciliation with him before he left the world? Who is there that when he beholds the remains of his adversary deposited in the dust, feels not, in that moment, some relents at the

remembrance of those past animosities which mutually embittered their life?—" There lies
" the man with whom I contended so long, silent and mute for ever. He is fallen; and I
" am about to follow him. How poor is the advantage which I now enjoy? Where are the
" fruits of all our contests? In a short time we
" shall be laid together; and no remembrance
" remain of either of us under the sun. How
" many mistakes may there have been between
" us? Had not he his virtues and good qualities
" as well as I? When we shall both appear before
" the judgment-seat of God, shall I be found innocent and free of blame, for all the enmity I
" have borne to him?"—My friends, let the anticipation of such sentiments serve now to correct the inveteracy of prejudice, to cool the heat of anger, to allay the fierceness of resentment. How unnatural is it for animosities so lasting to possess the hearts of mortal men, that nothing can extinguish them but the cold hand of death? Is there not a sufficient proportion of evils in the short span of human life, that we seek to increase their number, by rushing into unnecessary contests with one another? When a few suns more have rolled over our heads, friends and foes shall have retreated together; and their love and their hatred be equally buried. Let our few days, then, be spent in peace. While we are all journeying
onwards

onwards to death, let us rather *bear one another's burdens*, than harrafs one another by the way. Let us smoothe and cheer the road as much as we can, rather than fill the valley of our pilgrimage with the hateful monuments of our contention and strife.

INSTRUCTION.

MMORAL and religious instruction derives its efficacy, not so much from what men are taught to know, as from what they are brought to feel. It is not the dormant knowledge of any truths, but the vivid impresson of them, which has influence on practice. Neither let it be thought that such meditations are unseasonable intrusions upon those who are living in health, in affluence, and ease. There is no hazard of their making too deep or painful an impresson. The gloom which they occasion is transient; and will soon, too soon, it is probable, be dispelled by the succeeding affairs and pleasures of the world. To wisdom it certainly belongs, that men should be impressed with just views of their nature and their state; and the pleasures of life will always be enjoyed to most advantage when they are tempered with serious thought.

PROGRESS OF VICE.

THERE are certain degrees of vice which are chiefly stamped with the character of the ridiculous, and the contemptible; and there are also certain limits, beyond which if it pass, it becomes odious and execrable. If, to other corruptions which the heart has already received, be added the infusion of sceptical principles, that worst of all the *evil communications* of sinners, the whole of morals is then on the point of being overthrown. For, every crime can then be palliated to conscience; every check and restraint which had hitherto remained, is taken away. He who, in the beginning of his course, soothed himself with the thought that while he indulged his desires, he did hurt to no man; now pressed by the necessity of supplying those wants into which his expensive pleasures have brought him, goes on without remorse to defraud and to oppress. The lover of pleasure now becomes hardened and cruel; violates his trust, or betrays his friend; becomes a man of treachery, or a man of blood; satisfying, or at least endeavouring all the while to satisfy himself, that circumstances form his excuse; that by necessity he is impelled; and that, in gratifying the passions
which

which nature had implanted within him, he does no more than follow nature.

Miserable and deluded man! to what art thou come at the last! Dost thou pretend to follow nature, when thou art contemning the laws of the God of nature?—when thou art stifling his voice within thee, which remonstrates against thy crimes? when thou art violating the best part of thy nature, by counteracting the dictates of justice and humanity? Dost thou follow nature, when thou renderest thyself an useless animal on the earth; and not useless only, but noxious to the society to which thou belongest?—Look with horror at the precipice, on the brink of which thou standest; and if yet a moment be left for retreat, think how thou mayest escape, and be saved.

CHOICE OF FRIENDS.

NOTHING is of more importance for the young, than to be careful in the choice of their friends and companions. This choice is too frequently made without much thought, or is determined by some casual connection; and yet, very often, the whole fate of their

their future life depends upon it. The circumstances which chiefly attract the liking and the friendship of youth, are vivacity, good humour, engaging manners, and a cheerful or easy temper; qualities, I confess, amiable in themselves, and useful and valuable in their place. But I intreat you to remember, that these are not all the qualities requisite to form an intimate companion or friend. Something more is still to be looked for; a sound understanding, a steady mind, a firm attachment to principle, to virtue, and honour. As only solid bodies polish well, it is only on the substantial ground of these manly endowments, that the other amiable qualities can receive their proper lustre.

SETTLED PRINCIPLES.

IN order to prevent the influence of *evil communications*, it is needful that you fix to yourselves certain principles of conduct, and be resolved and determined on no occasion to swerve from them. Setting the consideration of religion and virtue aside, and attending merely to interest and reputation, it will be found, that he who enters on active life without having ascertained some regular plan, according to which he is to guide

guide himself, will be unprosperous in the whole of his subsequent progress. But when conduct is viewed in a moral and religious light, the effect of having fixed no principles of action, of having formed no laudable standard of character, becomes more obviously fatal. For hence it is, that the young and thoughtless imbibe so readily the poison of *evil communications*, and fall a prey to every seducer. They have no internal guide whom they are accustomed to follow and obey; nothing within themselves that can give firmness to their conduct. They are of course the victims of momentary inclination or caprice; religious and good by starts, when, during the absence of temptation and tempters, the virtuous principle stirs within them; but never long the same; changing and fluctuating according to the passion that chances to rise, or the instigation of those with whom they have connected themselves. They are sailing on a dangerous sea, which abounds with rocks; without compass, by which to direct their course; or helm, by which to guide the vessel. Whereas, if they acted on a system, if their behaviour made it appear that they were determined to conduct themselves by certain rules and principles, not only would they escape innumerable dangers, but they would command respect from the licentious themselves. Evil doers would cease to lay their snares for one whom they
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saw moving above them, in a higher sphere, and with a more steady course.

FORTITUDE.

FORTITUDE was justly classed by the ancient philosophers, among the cardinal virtues. It is indeed essential to the support of them all; and it is most necessary to be acquired by every one who wishes to discharge with fidelity the duties of his station. It is the armour of the mind, which will fit him for encountering the trials, and surmounting the dangers, that are likely to occur in the course of his life. It may be thought, perhaps, to be a quality, in some measure, constitutional; dependent on firmness of nerves, and strength of spirits. Though, partly it is so, yet experience shews that it may also be acquired by principle, and be fortified by reason; and it is only when thus acquired, and thus fortified, that it can be accounted to carry the character of virtue. Fortitude is opposed, as all know, to timidity, irresolution, a feeble and a wavering spirit. It is placed, like other virtues, in the middle, between two extremes; standing at an equal distance from rashness on the one hand, and from pusillanimity on the other.

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CHRISTIAN FORTITUDE.

WITHOUT Fortitude, no man can be a thorough Christian. For his profession, as such, requires him to be superior to that *fear of man which bringeth a snare*; enjoins him, for the sake of a good conscience, to encounter every danger; and to be prepared, if called, even to lay down his life in the cause of religion and truth. All who have been distinguished as servants of God, or benefactors of men; all who, in perilous situations, have acted their part with such honour as to render their names illustrious through succeeding ages, have been eminent for fortitude of mind.

FALSE COURAGE.

A CORRUPTED and guilty man can possess no true firmness of heart. He who, by crooked paths, pursues dishonourable ends, has many things to dismay him. He not only dreads the disappointment of his designs, by some of those accidents to which all are exposed; but he has also to dread the treachery of his confederates,

rates, the discovery and reproach of the world, and the just displeasure of Heaven. His fears he is obliged to conceal; but while he assumes the appearance of intrepidity before the world, he trembles within himself; and the bold and steady eye of integrity frequently darts terror into his heart. There is, it is true, a sort of constitutional courage, which sometimes has rendered men daring in the most flagitious attempts. But this fool-hardiness of the rash, this boldness of the ruffian, is altogether different from real fortitude. It arises merely from warmth of blood, from want of thought, and blindness to danger. As it forms no character of value, so it appears only in occasional fallies; and never can be uniformly maintained. It requires adventitious props to support it; and, in some hour of trial, always fails.— There can be no true courage, no regular persevering constancy, but what is connected with principle, and founded on a consciousness of rectitude of intention.

DIVINE SUPPORT.

THE good man knows, that he is acting under the immediate eye and protection of the Almighty. *Behold my witness is in heaven; and my*

my record is on high. The consciousness of such an illustrious spectator, invigorates and animates him. He trusts, that the eternal lover of righteousness not only beholds and approves, but will strengthen and assist; will not suffer him to be unjustly oppressed, and will reward his constancy in the end, with glory, honour, and immortality. A good conscience, thus supported, bestows on the heart a much greater degree of intrepidity than it could otherwise inspire. One who rests on an almighty, though invisible, Protector, exerts his powers with double force; and acts with vigour not his own.

ENVY.

ENVY is a sensation of uneasiness and disquiet, arising from the advantages which others are supposed to possess above us, accompanied with malignity towards those who possess them. This is universally admitted to be one of the blackest passions in the human heart. In this world we depend much on one another; and were therefore formed by God to be mutually useful and assisting. The instincts of kindness and compassion which belong to our frame, shew how much it was the intention of our Creator

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that we should be united in friendship. If any infringe this great law of nature, by acts of causeless hostility, resentment may justly arise. No one is to be condemned for defending his rights, and shewing displeasure against a malicious enemy. But to conceive ill-will at one who has attacked none of our rights, nor done us any injury, solely because he is more prosperous than we are, is a disposition altogether unnatural; it suits not the human constitution, and partakes more of the rancour of an evil spirit. Hence, the character of an envious man is universally odious. All disclaim it; and they who feel themselves under the influence of this passion, carefully conceal it.

EFFECTS OF INDOLENCE.

THE human mind cannot remain always unemployed. Its passions must have some exercise. If we supply them not with proper employment, they are sure to run loose into riot and disorder. While we are unoccupied by what is good, evil is continually at hand; and hence it is said in Scripture, that as soon as Satan *found the house empty*, he took possession, and filled it with *evil spirits*. Every man who recollects his conduct,

conduct, may be satisfied, that his hours of idleness have always proved the hours most dangerous to virtue. It was then that criminal desires arose; guilty pursuits were suggested; and designs were formed, which, in their issue, have disquieted and embittered his whole life. If seasons of idleness be dangerous, what must a continued habit of it prove? Habitual indolence, by a silent and secret progress, undermines every virtue in the soul. More violent passions run their course, and terminate. They are like rapid torrents, which foam, and swell, and bear down every thing before them. But after having overflowed their banks, their impetuosity subsides. They return, by degrees, into their natural channel; and the damage which they have done can be repaired. Sloth is like the slowly-flowing, putrid stream, which stagnates in the marsh, breeds venomous animals, and poisonous plants; and infects with pestilential vapours the whole country round it. Having once tainted the soul, it leaves no part of it sound; and, at the same time, gives not those alarms to conscience, which the eruptions of bolder and fiercer emotions often occasion. The disease which it brings on, is creeping and insidious; and is, on that account, more certainly mortal.

ADVANTAGES OF LABOUR.

HE who knows not what it is to labour, knows not what it is to enjoy. The felicity of human life depends on the regular prosecution of some laudable purpose or object, which keeps awake and enlivens all our powers. Our happiness consists in the pursuit, much more than in the attainment, of any temporal good. Rest is agreeable; but it is only from preceding labours that rest acquires its true relish. When the mind is suffered to remain in continued inaction, all its powers decay. It soon languishes and sickens; and the pleasures which it proposed to obtain from rest, end in tediousness and insipidity. To this, let that miserable set of men bear witness, who, after spending great part of their life in active industry, have retired to what they fancied was to be a pleasing enjoyment of themselves, in wealthy inactivity, and profound repose. Where they expected to find an elysium, they have found nothing but a dreary and comfortless waste. Their days have dragged on, in uniform languor; with the melancholy remembrance often returning, of the cheerful hours they passed, when they were engaged in the honest business and labours of the world.

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THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

WE live in a world which is full of the Divine presence and power. We behold every where around us the traces of that supreme goodness which enlivens and supports the universe. *Day uttereth speech of it to day; and night sheweth knowledge of it to night.* Yet, surrounded as we are with the perfections of God, meeting him wherever we go, and called upon by a thousand objects, to confess his presence, it is both the misfortune and the crime of a great part of mankind, that they are strangers to Him, in whose world they dwell. Occupied with nothing but their pursuits of interest and pleasure, they pass through this world, as though God were not there. The virtuous and reflecting are particularly distinguished from the giddy and dissolute, by that habitual sense of the Divine presence which characterises the former. To them, nothing appears void of God. They contemplate his perfections in the works of nature; and they trace his Providence in the incidents of life.—When retired from the world, he often employs their meditation.—When engaged in action, he always influences their conduct.—Wherever a pious man is, or whatever he does, he is *continually with God.*

The presence of one whom we highly esteem and revere, of a sovereign, for instance, a father, or a friend, whose approbation we are solicitous to gain, is always found to exalt the powers of men, to refine and improve their behaviour.—Hence, it has been given as a rule by ancient moralists, that, in order to excel in virtue, we should propound to ourselves some person of eminent and distinguished worth; and should accustom ourselves to act as if he were standing by, and beholding us. To the esteem and approbation of their fellow-creatures, none are insensible. There are few who, in the conspicuous parts of their life, when they know the eyes of the public to be fixed on them, act not their part with propriety and decorum. But what is the observation of the public, what is the presence of the greatest or wisest men on earth, to that presence of the Divinity which constantly surrounds us? The man who realizes to his mind this august presence, feels a constant incentive for acquitting himself with dignity. He views himself as placed on an illustrious theatre. To have the Almighty for the spectator and witness of his conduct, is more to him than if the whole world were assembled to observe him. Men judge often falsely, always imperfectly, of what passes before them. They are imposed on by specious appearances; and the artful carry away the praise
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which is due to the deserving. Even supposing them to judge fairly, we may want the opportunity of doing justice to our character, by any proper display of it in the sight of the world. Our situation may bury in obscurity, those talents and virtues which were entitled to command the highest esteem. But he, in whose presence the good man acts, is both an impartial, and an unerring, judge of worth. No fallacious appearances impose on him. No secret virtue is hidden from him. He is attentive equally to the meanest and the greatest; and his approbation confers eternal rewards. The man, therefore, who *sets the Lord always before him*, is prompted to excel in virtue by motives which are peculiar to himself, and which engage, on the side of duty, both honour and interest. *I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies; for all my ways are before thee.*

DIVINE OMNISCIENCE.

HE hears the whisper of devotion as it rises in the soul. He beholds the tear of contrition which falls in secret. He sees the good intention struggling in its birth; and pursues it, in its progress, through those various obstacles which
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may prevent it from ripening into action. Good men, therefore, in their most humbled and dejected state, draw some consolation from his knowledge of their heart. Though they may have erred from the right path, they can look up to him who is ever with them, and say, as an apostle, who had grievously offended, once said to his great Master, *Lord, thou knowest all things : thou knowest that I love thee.*

PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY.

LET us first view the good man in what the world calls prosperity ; when his circumstances are easy or affluent, and his life flows in a smooth untroubled stream. Here, it might be thought, that a sense of the Divine presence could operate upon him only, or chiefly, for promoting temperance, and restraining the disorders incident to a prosperous state. Valuable effects, indeed, these are ; and most conducive to the true enjoyment of all that is agreeable in life. But though it, doubtless, does exert this salutary influence, yet it stops not there. It not only preserves the virtue of a good man amidst the temptations of pleasure, but it gives to his prosperity a security, and a peculiar relish, which to others

is unknown. He who is without a sense of God upon his mind, beholds in human affairs nothing but a perpetual fluctuation, and vicissitude of events. He is surrounded with unknown causes, which may be working his destruction in secret. He cannot avoid perceiving, that there hangs over him the irresistible arm of that Providence, whose displeasure he has done nothing to stay or avert. But he who, in the day of prosperity, dwells with God, is delivered from those disquieting alarms. He dwells as with a friend and protector, from whom he conceives his blessings to proceed. He can appeal to him for the thankfulness with which he receives them; and for his endeavours to employ them well. He trusts that the God whom he serves will not forsake him; that the goodness which he has already experienced, will continue to bless him; and though he believes himself not exempted from the changes of the world, yet in the midst of these, he has ground to hope that sources of comfort and happiness shall always be left open to him.

Moreover, the pleasures of life, while they last, are unspeakably heightened by the presence of that benefactor who bestows them. The pleasing emotion of gratitude to the giver mingles with the enjoyment of the gift. While to the mere worldly man, the whole frame of nature is
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only a vast irregular fabric; and the course of human affairs no more than a confused succession of fortuitous events; all nature is beautified, and every agreeable incident is enlivened, to him who beholds God in all things. Hence arise a variety of pleasing sensations, to fill up those solitary hours, in which external prosperity supplies him with no entertainment. In the smiling scenes of nature, he contemplates the benignity of its author. In its sublime objects, he admires his majesty. In its awful and terrible ones, he adores his power. He dwells in this world as in a magnificent temple, which is full of the glory of its founder; and every where views nature offering up its incense to him, from a thousand altars.—Such ideas exalt and ennoble the human mind; and reflect an additional lustre on the brightness of prosperity.

From the prosperous, let us next turn to the afflicted condition of a good man. For as prosperity may, affliction certainly will, at one time or other, be his lot. It enters into the appointed trial of his virtue; and, in one degree or other, is the doom of all. Here we shall find various situations occur, in which no relief is equal to what a virtuous and holy man derives from a sense of the perpetual presence of God.

Is he, for instance, thrown into an obscure condition in the world, without friends to assist him, or any to regard and consider his estate? He enjoys the satisfaction of thinking, that though he may be neglected by men, he is not forgotten by God. Inconsiderable as he is in himself, he knows, that he will not be overlooked by the Almighty, amidst the infinite variety of being, or lost in the immensity of his works. The poor man can, with as much encouragement as the rich or great, lift up his eyes to heaven, and say, *Nevertheless, O Lord, I am continually with thee: Thou holdest me by my right hand.* The gracious presence of that Supreme Being is affected by no diversity of rank or fortune. It imparts itself alike to all the virtuous and upright; like its glorious image, the sun in the firmament, which sheds its rays equally upon the humble cottage, and upon the palace of kings. In the presence of the great Lord of heaven and earth, all the distinctions which vanity has contrived to make among men, totally disappear. All ranks are on one level. *The rich and the poor* here indeed *meet together*; without any other distinction than what arises from the heart and the soul. The sense of this, lifts the poor man above contempt; supports his spirits when apt to be dejected; and bestows dignity on the part which he acts. How inconsiderable
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foever that part may appear in the estimation of an injudicious world, it is ennobled, when virtuously performed, by the approbation of his divine witness. He can bear with indifference the scorn of the proud, as long as he knows that there is one higher than the highest to regard him. He can enjoy himself with pleasure in his mean habitation, because he believes that God dwells with him there. The Divine presence cheers to him the most lonely retreat. It accompanies his steps to the most distant regions of the earth. If he should be driven into exile from all his friends, and obliged to *dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea*, even there God's hand would hold him, and his right hand would guide him. Though left without companion or friend, he never thinks himself desolate, as long as he can say, *I am still with God.*

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

WE all know that to communicate our grief to a faithful friend, often gives ease and relief to the burdened heart. Such communication we are encouraged to make, and such relief we may expect to find, in pouring out our heart before that God *in whom compassions flow.* We
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may have no earthly friend to whom we can with full confidence disclose all our sorrows; or we may want words in which to express them. But God is the searcher of all hearts; and the hearer of all prayers. To the secret anguish of the soul, he is no inattentive witness. Every groan which is heaved from the labouring bosom, though heard by no human ear, reaches his throne. As he *knows our frame*, so he *remembers we are dust*; and thence *light arises to the upright in darkness*. For the hope naturally springs, that this beneficent being will pity them, *as a father pitieth his children*; and in the midst of those distresses which the present circumstances of man render unavoidable, will *send them help from his sanctuary*. Surrounded with this compassionate presence of the Almighty, good men never view themselves as left in this vale of tears, to bear, solitary and alone, the whole weight of human woe. In their dark, as well as in their brighter hours, God is with them. Even in that valley of the shadow of death, where no friend, no comforter, can go along to aid them, he is with them still. In the last extremity of nature, *the rod and staff of the Shepherd of Israel support them*.

THE PASSIONATE MAN.

HARDLY a day passes, without somewhat or other occurring, which serves to ruffle the man of impatient spirit. Of course, such a man lives in a continual storm. He knows not what it is to enjoy a train of good humour. Servants, neighbours, friends, spouse, and children, all, through the unrestrained violence of his temper, become sources of disturbance and vexation to him. In vain his affluence; in vain are health and prosperity. The least trifle is sufficient to discompose his mind, and poison his pleasures. His very amusements are mixed with turbulence and passion.

I would beseech this man to consider, of what small moment the provocations which he receives, or at least imagines himself to receive, are really in themselves; but of what great moment he makes them, by suffering them to deprive him of the possession of himself. I would beseech him to consider, how many hours of happiness he throws away, which a little more patience would allow him to enjoy; and how much he puts it in the power of the most insignificant persons to render him miserable. "But who can expect," we hear him exclaim, "that he is to possess the insensibility

“ sensibility of a stone? How is it possible for
“ human nature to endure so many repeated pro-
“ vocations? or to bear calmly with such unrea-
“ sonable behaviour?”—My brother! If you can
bear with no instances of unreasonable behaviour,
withdraw yourself from the world. You are no
longer fit to live in it. Leave the intercourse of
men. Retreat to the mountain and the desert;
or shut yourself up in a cell. For here, in the
midst of society, *offences must come*. You might
as well expect, when you behold a calm atmo-
sphere, and a clear sky, that no clouds were ever
to rise, and no winds to blow, as that your life
was long to proceed, without receiving provoca-
tions from human frailty. The careless and the
imprudent, the giddy and the fickle, the ungrate-
ful and the interested, every where meet us.—
They are the briars and the thorns, with which
the paths of human life are beset. He only who
can hold his course among them with patience
and equanimity, he who is prepared to bear what
he must expect to happen, is worthy of the name
of a man.

Did you only preserve yourself composed for a
moment, you would perceive the insignificance
of most of those provocations which you magnify
so highly. When a few suns more have rolled
over your head, the storm will have, of itself,

subsidèd; the cause of your present impatience and disturbance will be utterly forgotten. Can you not, then, anticipate this hour of calmness to yourself; and begin to enjoy the peace which it will certainly bring? If others have behaved improperly, leave them to their own folly, without becoming the victim of their caprice, and punishing yourself on their account.—Patience, in this exercise of it, cannot be too much studied by all who wish their life to flow in a smooth stream. It is the reason of a man, in opposition to the passion of a child. It is the enjoyment of peace, in opposition to uproar and confusion. *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.*

PATIENCE.

DISAPPOINTMENTS will often happen to the best and wisest men; sometimes to the wisest and best-concerted plans. They may happen, too, not through any imprudence of those who have devised the plan, not even through the malice or ill design of others; but merely in consequence of some of those cross incidents of life which could not be foreseen. On such occasions, persons of a warm and sanguine temper are

are presently in a ferment. They had formed their hopes, as they think, upon the justest grounds. They had waited long for success; and borne with many delays. But when their designs are brought to so unexpected an issue; when, without any fault of their own, they find their hopes finally blasted, all patience forsakes them; they no longer possess their souls; the most passionate exclamations break forth. “To whom, except to them, could such a disappointment have happened? Since the creation of the world, was such a combination of disastrous incidents ever beheld? Why are they doomed to be so unfortunate beyond all others?” —Alas! how unskilfully have you calculated the course of human events? How rashly and presumptuously had you trusted to success? To whom was it ever given, to guard against all the vicissitudes, which the fluctuating *fashion of the world* is incessantly bringing about? If one friend, to whom you looked up, has died, or another has lost his influence and power; if the opinion of the public is changed, and its favour has been withdrawn; if some mistakes have occurred to lessen the good-will of a patron on whom you depended; if, through the concurrence of these, or such like circumstances, a more fortunate rival has prevailed against you; what is there in all this, that differs from the ordinary lot of man?

Are we not, each in his turn, doomed to experience the uncertainty of worldly pursuits? Why, then, aggravate our misfortunes by the unreasonable violence of an impatient spirit? If our designs have failed through rashness or misconduct, let us blame ourselves. If they have failed through circumstances which we could not prevent, let us submit to the fate of man; and wait, with patience, till a more favourable opportunity shall occur of regaining success.

Meanwhile, let us turn to the other side of the prospect; and calmly consider how dubious it was, whether the success which we longed for, would have proved a blessing. *Who knoweth what is good for man in this life?* Perhaps the accomplishment of our designs might have been pregnant with misery. Perhaps, from our present disappointment, future prosperity may rise. Of such unlooked for issues, we all know there have been many examples. Who can tell, whether our case may not add one to the number?—At any rate, let us recollect, that there is a Supreme Ruler, who disposes of the affairs of men; under whom, all second causes work only as subordinate agents. Looking up to that irresistible arm which is stretched over our heads, let us be calm; let us submit, and adore. Either to despair, or to rage, under disappointment, is sinful. By the former,

former, we injure ourselves. By the latter, we insult Providence, and provoke its displeasure to continue.

RESTRAINT.

NUMEROUS are the restraints imposed on us, by the nature of the human condition. To the restraints of authority and law, all must submit. The restraints of education and discipline lie on the young. Considerations of health restrain the indulgence of pleasure. Attentions to fortune restrain expence. Regard to friends, whom we are bound to please, respect to established customs, and to the opinions of society, impose restraint on our general behaviour. There is no man, in any rank of life, who is always at liberty to act according as he would incline. In some quarter or other, he is limited by circumstances, that either actually confine, or that ought at least to confine and restrain him.

These restraints, the impatient are apt to scorn. They will needs burst the barriers which reason had erected, or their situation had formed; and without regard to consequences, give free scope to their present wish. Hence, many dangerous
excesses

excesses flow; much confusion and misery are produced in human life. Had men the patience to submit to their condition, and to wait till it should allow them a freer indulgence of their desires, they might, in a short time, obtain the power of gratifying them with safety. If the young, for instance, would undergo, with patience, the labours of education, they would rise, at a proper period, to honours, riches, or ease. If the infirm would, with patience, bear the regulations which their constitution demands, they might regain the comforts of health. If persons of straitened fortune had patience to conform themselves to their circumstances, and to abridge their pleasures, they might, by degrees, improve and advance their state. Whereas, by eagerness of temper, and precipitancy of indulgence, they forfeit all the advantages which patience would have procured; and incur the opposite evils to their full extent.

PASSION AND PATIENCE.

NOTHING is so inconsistent with self-possession as violent anger. It overpowers reason; confounds our ideas; distorts the appearance, and blackens the colour, of every object.
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By the storm which it raises within, and by the mischiefs which it occasions without, it generally brings, on the passionate and revengeful man, greater misery than he can bring on his enemy. Patience allays this destructive tempest, by making room for the return of calm and sober thought. It suspends the blow which sudden resentment was ready to inflict. It disposes us to attend to the alleviating circumstances, which may be discovered in the midst of the wrongs we suppose ourselves to have suffered. Hence it naturally inclines us to the moderate and gentle side; and while it allows all proper measures to be taken, both for safety, and for just redress, it makes way for returning peace.—Without some degree of patience exercised under injuries, human life would be rendered a state of perpetual hostility; offences and retaliations would succeed to one another in endless train; and the world would become a field of blood.

PATIENCE UNDER AFFLICTION.

PATIENCE, with respect to God, must, in the days of trouble, suppress the risings of a murmuring and rebellious spirit. It must appear in that calm resignation to the will of Heaven

Heaven, which is expressed in those pious sentiments of ancient good men: *I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his eyes. Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?* This is loyalty to the great Governor of the Universe. This is that reverence which so well becomes creatures who know they are dependent, and who must confess themselves to be sinful. Whereas the stubborn and impatient, who submit not themselves to the decrees of the Most High, require to be humbled and subdued by a continuance of chastisement.

Patience in adversity, with respect to men, must appear by the composure and tranquillity of our behaviour. The loud complaint, the querulous temper, and fretful spirit, disgrace every character. They shew a mind that is unmanned by misfortunes. We weaken thereby the sympathy of others; and estrange them from the offices of kindness and comfort.—Patience, by preserving composure within, resists the impression which trouble makes from without. By leaving the mind open to every consolation, it naturally tends to alleviate our burden.—To maintain a steady and unbroken mind, amidst all the shocks of the world, forms the highest honour of a man. Patience, on such occasions, rises to magnanimity.

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shews a great and noble mind, which is able to rest on itself, on God, and a good conscience; which can enjoy itself amidst all evils; and would rather endure the greatest hardships, than submit to what was dishonourable, in order to obtain relief. This gives proof of a strength that is derived from Heaven. It is a beam of the immortal light, shining on the heart. Such patience is the most complete triumph of religion and virtue; and accordingly it has ever characterised those whose names have been transmitted with honour to posterity. It has ennobled the hero, the saint, and the martyr. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed: we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.*

AMBITION.

THE active mind of man seldom or never rests satisfied with its present condition, how prosperous soever. Originally formed for a wider range of objects, for a higher sphere of enjoyments, it finds itself, in every situation of fortune, straightened and confined. Sensible of deficiency in its state, it is ever sending forth the fond desire, the aspiring wish, after something
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beyond what is enjoyed at present. Hence, that restlessness which prevails so generally among mankind. Hence that disgust of pleasures which they have tried; that passion for novelty; that ambition of rising to some degree of eminence or felicity, of which they have formed to themselves an indistinct idea. All which may be considered as indications of a certain native, original, greatness in the human soul, swelling beyond the limits of its present condition; and pointing at the higher objects for which it was made. Happy, if these latent remains of our primitive state served to direct our wishes towards their proper destination, and to lead us into the path of true bliss!

But in this dark and bewildered state, the aspiring tendency of our nature unfortunately takes an opposite direction, and feeds a very misplaced ambition. The flattering appearances which here present themselves to sense; the distinctions which fortune confers; the advantages and pleasures which we imagine the world to be capable of bestowing, fill up the ultimate wish of most men. These are the objects which engross their solitary musings, and stimulate their active labours; which warm the breast of the young, animate the industry of the middle-aged, and often keep alive the passions of the old, until the very close of life. Assuredly, there is nothing

thing unlawful in our wishing to be freed from whatever is disagreeable, and to obtain a fuller enjoyment of the comforts of life. But when these wishes are not tempered by reason, they are in danger of precipitating us into much extravagance and folly.

You have strayed, my friends, from the road which conducts to felicity; you have dishonoured the native dignity of your souls, in allowing your wishes to terminate in nothing higher than worldly ideas of greatness or happiness. Your imagination roves in a land of shadows. Unreal forms deceive you. It is no more than a phantom, an illusion of happiness which attracts your fond admiration; nay, an illusion of happiness which often conceals much real misery. Do you imagine, that all are happy, who have attained to those summits of distinction, towards which your wishes aspire? Alas! how frequently has experience shewed, that where roses were supposed to bloom, nothing but briars and thorns grew? Reputation, beauty, riches, grandeur, nay, royalty itself, would, many a time, have been gladly exchanged by the possessors, for that more quiet and humble station, with which you are now dissatisfied. With all that is splendid and shining in the world, it is decreed that there should mix many deep shades of woe. On the

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elevated

elevated situations of fortune, the great calamities of life chiefly fall. There the storm spends its violence, and there the thunder breaks; while safe and unhurt the inhabitant of the vale remains below.—Retreat, then, from those vain and pernicious excursions of extravagant desire. Satisfy yourselves with what is rational and attainable. Train your minds to moderate views of human life and human happiness.

INTEMPERANCE.

IN all the pleasures of sense, it is apparent, that only when indulged within certain limits, they confer satisfaction. No sooner do we pass the line which temperance has drawn, than pernicious effects come forward and shew themselves. Could I lay open to your view the monuments of death, they would read a lecture in favour of moderation, much more powerful than any that the most eloquent preacher can give. You would behold the graves peopled with the victims of intemperance. You would behold those chambers of darkness hung round, on every side, with the trophies of luxury, drunkenness, and sensuality. So numerous would you find those martyrs of iniquity, that it may safely be asserted,

asserted, where war and pestilence have slain their thousands, intemperate pleasure has slain its ten thousands.

MODERATION.

THE man of moderation brings to all the natural and innocent pleasures of life, that sound, uncorrupted relish, which gives him a much fuller enjoyment of them, than the palled and vitiated appetite of the voluptuary allows him to know. He culls the flower of every allowable gratification, without dwelling upon it until the flavour be lost. He tastes the sweet of every pleasure, without pursuing it till the bitter dregs arise. Whereas the man of opposite character dips so deep, that he never fails to stir an impure and noxious sediment, which lies at the bottom of the cup.—In the pleasures, besides, which are regulated by moderation, there is always that dignity which goes along with innocence. No man needs to be ashamed of them. They are consistent with honour; with the favour of God, and of man. But the sensualist, who disdains all restraint in his pleasures, is odious in the public eye. His vices become gross;

his character contemptible; and he ends in being a burden both to himself and to society.

HAPPINESS.

IF you would judge whether a man be really happy, it is not solely to his houses and his lands, to his equipage and his retinue, you are to look. Unless you could see farther, and discern what joy, or what bitterness, his heart feels, you can pronounce nothing concerning him. That proud and wicked man whom you behold surrounded with state and splendour, and upon whom you think the favours of Heaven so improperly lavished, may be a wretch, pining away in secret, with a thousand griefs unknown to the world. That poor man, who appears neglected and overlooked, may, in his humble station, be partaking of all the moral, and all the social joys, that exhilarate the heart; may be living cheerful, contented and happy. Cease then to murmur against dispensations of Providence, which are, to us, so imperfectly known. Envy not the prosperity of sinners. Judge not of the real condition of men, from what floats merely on the surface of their state.

GOOD-

GOOD-NATURE.

THE good qualities which some men possess, border on certain weaknesses of the mind; and these weaknesses are apt to betray them insensibly into vices, with which they are connected.

Good-nature, for instance, is in danger of running into that unlimited complaisance, which assimilates men to the loose manners of those whom they find around them. Pliant, and yielding in their temper, they have not force to stand by the decisions of their own minds, with regard to right and wrong. Like the animal which is said to assume the colour of every object to which it is applied, they lose all proper character of their own; and are formed by the characters of those with whom they chance to associate. The mild are apt to sink into habits of indolence and sloth. The cheerful and gay, when warmed by pleasure and mirth, lose that sobriety and self-denial, which is essential to the support of virtue.—Even modesty and submission, qualities so valuable in themselves, and so highly ornamental to youth, sometimes degenerate into a vicious timidity; a timidity which restrains men from doing their duty with firmness; which cannot stand the frown of

the great, the reproach of the multitude, or even the ridicule and sneer of the scorner.

Nothing can be more amiable than a constant desire to please; and an unwillingness to offend or hurt. Yet in characters where this is a predominant feature, defects are often found. Fond always to oblige, and afraid to utter any disagreeable truth, such persons are sometimes led to dissimble. Their love of truth is sacrificed to their love of pleasing. Their speech, and their manners, assume a studied courtesy. You cannot always depend on their smile; nor, when they promise, be sure of their performance. They mean and intend well; but the good intention is temporary. Like wax, they yield easily to every impression; and the transient friendship contracted with one person, is effaced by the next.

PIETY.

PIETY must form the basis of firm and established virtue. If this be wanting, the character cannot be sound and entire. Moral virtue will always be endangered, often be overthrown, when it is separated from its surest support. Confidence in God, strengthened by faith in the
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great Redeemer of mankind, not only amidst the severer trials of virtue, gives constancy to the mind, but, by nourishing the hope of immortality, adds warmth and elevation to the affections. They, whose conduct is not animated by religious principle, are deprived of the most powerful incentive to worthy and honourable deeds.

DEATH OF CHRIST.

CONTEMPLATE the manner in which our blessed Lord died. You behold him, amidst the extremity of pain, calm and collected within himself; possessing his spirit with all the serenity which sublime devotion, and exalted benevolence inspire. You hear him, first, lamenting the fate of his unhappy country; next, when he was fastened to the cross, addressing words of consolation to his afflicted parent; and, lastly, sending up prayers mixed with compassionate apologies for those who were shedding his blood. After all those exercises of charity, you behold him in an act of devout adoration and trust, resigning his breath: *Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit.* — Can any death be pronounced

nounced unhappy, how distressful soever its circumstances may be, which is thus supported, and dignified? What could we wish for more in our last moments, than with this peaceful frame of mind, this calm of all the affections, this exaltation of heart towards God, this diffusion of benevolence towards men, to bid adieu to the world?

If in such a spirit as this, we would all wish to die, let us think that now is the time to prepare for it, by seasonably cultivating this spirit while we live; by imbibing those dispositions and affections which we would wish to possess at our latest period.

PLEASURE.

AMONG the crowd of amusements, the voluptuary may endeavour to stifle his uneasiness; but through all his defences it will penetrate. A conscious sense of his own insignificance, when he sees others distinguished for acting a manly and worthy part; reflection on the time he has wasted, and the contempt he has incurred; the galling remembrance of his earlier and better days, when he gave the fair promise
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of accomplishments, which now are blasted, have frequently been found to sadden the festive hour. The noise of merriment may be heard; but heaviness lies at the heart. While the tabret and the viol play, a melancholy voice sounds in his ears. The wasted estate, the neglected halls, and ruined mansions of his father, rise to view. The angry countenances of his friends seem to stare him in the face. A hand appears to come forth on the wall, and to write his doom.

Retreat, then, from your dishonourable courses, ye who by licentiousness, extravagance, and vice, are abusers of the world! You are degrading—you are ruining yourselves. You are grossly misemploying the gifts of God; and the Giver will not fail to punish. Awake to the pursuits of men of virtue and honour. Break loose from that magic circle, within which you are at present held. Reject the poisoned cup which the enchantress Pleasure holds up to your lips. Draw aside the veil which she throws over your eyes. You will then see other objects than you now behold. You will see a dark abyss opening below your feet. You will see virtue and temperance marking out the road, which conducts to true felicity. You will be enabled to discern, that the world is enjoyed to advantage, by none but such as follow those divine guides; and who consider

sider pleasure as the seasoning, but not as the business, of life.

VANITY OF THE WORLD.

THE fashion of the world passeth away. Its pomp and its pleasures, its riches, magnificence, and glory, are no more than a transient shew. Every thing that we here enjoy, changes, decays, and comes to an end. All floats on the surface of a river, which, with swift current, is running towards a boundless ocean. Beyond this present scene of things, above those sublunary regions, we are to look for what is permanent and stable. The world passes away; but God, and heaven, and virtue, continue unchangeably the same. We are soon to enter into eternal habitations; and into these, our works shall follow us.

JUSTICE AND MERCY.

WE must undoubtedly begin with being just, before we attempt to be generous. At the same time, he who goes no farther than bare justice,

justice, stops at the beginning of virtue. We are commanded to *do justly*, but to *love mercy*.— The one virtue regulates our actions. The other improves our heart and affections. Each is equally necessary to the happiness of the world. Justice is the pillar that upholds the whole fabric of human society. Mercy is the genial ray, which cheers and warms the habitations of men. The perfection of our social character consists in properly tempering the two with one another; in holding that middle course, which admits of our being just, without being rigid; and allows us to be generous, without being unjust.

CHRISTIANITY RATIONAL.

THE doctrines of the Christian religion are rational and pure. All that it has revealed concerning the perfections of God, his moral government and laws, the destination of man, and the rewards and punishments of a future state, is perfectly consonant to the most enlightened reason. In some articles which transcend the limits of our present faculties, as in what relates to the essence of the Godhead, the fallen state of mankind, and their redemption by Jesus Christ, its doctrines may appear mysterious and dark.

Against

Against these the scoffer has often directed his attacks, as if whatever could not be explained by us, ought upon that account to be exploded as absurd.

It is unnecessary to enter, at present, on any particular defence of these doctrines, as there is one observation which, if duly weighed, is sufficient to silence the cavils of the scoffer. Is he not compelled to admit, that the whole system of nature around him is full of mystery? What reason, then, had he to suppose, that the doctrines of revelation, proceeding from the same author, were to contain no mysterious obscurity? All that is requisite for the conduct of life, both in nature and in religion, divine wisdom has rendered obvious to all. As nature has afforded us sufficient information concerning what is necessary for our food, our accommodation, and our safety; so religion has plainly instructed us in our duty towards God, and our neighbour. But as soon as we attempt to rise towards objects that lie beyond our immediate sphere of action, our curiosity is checked; and darkness meets us on every side. What the essence is of those material bodies which we see and handle; how a seed grows up into a tree; how man is formed in the womb; or how the mind acts upon the body, after it is formed; are mysteries of which we can give no more account, than of the most
obscure

obscure and difficult parts of revelation. We are obliged to admit the existence of the fact, though the explanation of it exceeds our faculties.

After the same manner, in natural religion, questions arise concerning the creation of the world from nothing, the origin of evil under the government of a perfect Being, and the consistency of human liberty with divine prescience, which are of as intricate nature, and of as difficult solution, as any questions in Christian theology. We may plainly see, that we are not admitted into the secrets of Providence, any more than into the mysteries of the Godhead. In all his ways, the Almighty is a *God that hideth himself. He maketh darkness his pavilion. He holdeth back the face of his throne; and spreadeth a thick cloud upon it.*—Instead of its being any objection to revelation, that some of its doctrines are mysterious, it would be much more strange and unaccountable, if no such doctrines were found in it. Had every thing in the Christian system been perfectly level to our capacities, this might rather have given ground to a suspicion, of its not proceeding from God; since it would have been then so unlike to what we find, both in the system of the universe, and in the system of natural religion. Whereas, according as matters now stand, the gospel has the same features, the same general

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character,

with the other two, which are acknowledged to be of divine origin ; plain and comprehensible, in what relates to practice ; dark and mysterious, in what relates to speculation and belief.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

THOUGHTLESS as the bulk of men are, and attached only to objects which they see around them, this principle has never been extinguished in their breasts, that to the great Parent of the human race, the universal, though invisible, benefactor of the world, not only internal reverence, but external homage, is due. Whether he need that homage or not, is not the question. It is what, on our part, we undoubtedly owe ; and the heart is, with reason, held to be base, which stifles the emotions of gratitude to a benefactor, how independent soever he may be of any returns. True virtue always prompts a public declaration of the grateful sentiments which it feels ; and glories in expressing them. Accordingly, over all the earth, crowds of worshippers have assembled to adore, in various forms, the Ruler of the world. In these adorations, the philosopher, the savage, and the saint, have equally joined. None but the cold and unfeeling

feeling can look up to that beneficent Being, who is at the head of the universe, without some inclination to pray, or to praise. In vain, therefore, would the scoffer deride what the loud voice of nature demands and justifies. He erects himself against the general and declared sense of the human race.

THE SCOFFER.

HE who treats sacred things with any degree of levity and scorn, is acting the part, perhaps without his seeing or knowing it, of a public enemy to society. He is precisely the *madman* described in the book of Proverbs, *who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death; and saith, am I not in sport?* We shall hear him, at times, complain loudly of the undutifulness of children, of the dishonesty of servants, of the tumults and insolence of the lower ranks; while he himself is, in a great measure, responsible for the disorders of which he complains. By the example which he sets of contempt for religion, he becomes accessory to the manifold crimes, which that contempt occasions among others. By his scoffing at sacred institutions, he is encouraging the rabble to uproar and violence; he is emboldening

the false witness to take the name of God in vain; he is in effect, putting arms into the hands of the highwayman, and letting loose the robber on the streets by night.

THE TEMPORIZER.

THE mere temporizer, the man of accommodating principles, and inferior virtue, may support a plausible character for a while among his friends and followers; but as soon as the hollowness of his principles is detected, he sinks into contempt. They who are prone to deride men of inflexible integrity, only betray the littleness of their minds. They shew that they understand not the sublime of virtue; that they have no discernment of the true excellence of man. By affecting to throw any discouragement on purity and strictness of morals, they not only expose themselves to just contempt, but propagate sentiments very dangerous to society. For, if we loosen the regard due to virtue in any of its parts, we begin to sap the whole of it. No man, as it has been often said, becomes entirely profligate at once. He deviates, step by step, from conscience. If the loose casuistry of the scoffer were to prevail, open dishonesty, falsehood, and trea-

treachery, would speedily grow out of those complying principles, those relaxations of virtue, which he would represent to be necessary for every man who knows the world.

RIDICULE OF RELIGION.

RELIGION and virtue, in all their forms, either of doctrine or of precept; of piety towards God, integrity towards men, or regularity in private conduct; are so far from affording any grounds of ridicule to the petulant, that they are entitled to our highest veneration; they are names which should never be mentioned, but with the utmost honour. It is said in Scripture, *Fools make a mock at sin.* They had better make a mock at pestilence, at war, or famine. With one who should chuse these public calamities for the subject of his sport, you would not be inclined to associate. You would fly from him, as worse than a fool; as a man of distempered mind, from whom you might be in hazard of receiving a sudden blow. Yet certain it is, that to the great society of mankind, sin is a greater calamity than either pestilence, or famine, or war. These operate only as occasional causes of misery. But the sins and vices of men, are perpetual

tual scourges of the world. Impiety and injustice, fraud and falsehood, intemperance and profligacy, are daily producing mischief and disorder; bringing ruin on individuals; tearing families and communities in pieces; giving rise to a thousand tragical scenes on this unhappy theatre. In proportion as manners are vicious, mankind are unhappy. The perfection of virtue which reigns in the world above, is the chief source of the perfect blessedness which prevails there.

CREATION.

THOUGH there was a period when this globe, with all that we see upon it, did not exist, we have no reason to think that the wisdom and power of the Almighty were then without exercise or employment. Boundless is the extent of his dominion. Other globes and worlds, enlightened by other suns, may then have occupied, they still appear to occupy, the immense regions of space. Numberless orders of beings, to us unknown, people the wide extent of the universe; and afford an endless variety of objects to the ruling care of the great Father of all. At length, in the course and progress of his government, there arrived a period, when

when this earth was to be called into existence. When the signal moment, predestined from all eternity, was come; the Deity arose in his might; and with a word created the world.—What an illustrious moment was that, when, from non-existence, there sprang at once into being this mighty globe, on which so many millions of creatures now dwell?—No preparatory measures were required. No long circuit of means was employed. *He spake, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast.* The earth was, at first, *without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.* The Almighty surveyed the dark abyfs; and fixed bounds to the several divisions of nature. He said, *Let there be light, and there was light.* Then appeared the sea, and the dry land. The mountains rose; and the rivers flowed. The sun and moon began their course in the skies. Herbs and plants clothed the ground. The air, the earth, and the waters, were stored with their respective inhabitants. At last, man was made after the image of God. He appeared, walking with countenance erect; and received his Creator's benediction, as the Lord of this new world. The Almighty beheld his work when it was finished; and pronounced it good. Superior beings saw with wonder this new accession to existence. *The morning stars sang together; and all the sons of God shouted for joy.*

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THE STUDY OF NATURE.

THE study of nature, which, for ages, has employed the lives of so many learned men, and which is still so far from being exhausted, is no other than the study of divine wisdom displayed in the creation. The farther our researches are carried, more striking proofs of it every where meet us. The provision made for the constant regularity of the universe, in the disposition of the heavenly bodies, so that in the course of several thousand years, nature should ever exhibit the same useful and grateful variety, in the returns of light and darkness, of summer and winter; and ever furnish food and habitation to all the animals that people the earth; must be a lasting theme of wonder to every reflecting mind.

GOODNESS OF THE CREATOR.

MALIGNANT must be the mind of that person; with a distorted eye he must have contemplated creation, who can suspect, that it is not the production of infinite benignity and goodness. How many clear marks of benevolent

lent intention appear every where around us; What a profusion of beauty and ornament is poured forth on the face of nature? What a magnificent spectacle presented to the view of man? What supply contrived for his wants? What a variety of objects set before him, to gratify his senses, to employ his understanding, to entertain his imagination, to cheer and gladden his heart? Indeed, the very existence of the universe is a standing memorial of the goodness of the Creator. For nothing except goodness, could originally prompt creation. The Supreme Being, self-existent and all-sufficient, had no wants which he could seek to supply. No new accession of felicity or glory was to result to him, from creatures whom he made. It was goodness, communicating and pouring itself forth, goodness delighting to impart happiness in all its forms, which in the beginning created the heaven and the earth. Hence those innumerable orders of living creatures with which the earth is peopled; from the lowest class of sensitive being, to the highest rank of reason and intelligence. Wherever there is life, there is some degree of happiness; there are enjoyments suited to the different powers of feeling; and earth, and air, and water, are with magnificent liberality made to teem with life.

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Let those striking displays of creating goodness call forth, on our part, responsive love, gratitude, and veneration. To this great Father of all existence and life, to Him who hath raised us up to behold the light of day, and to enjoy all the comforts which his world presents, let our hearts send forth a perpetual hymn of praise. Evening and morning let us celebrate Him, who maketh the morning and the evening to rejoice over our heads; who *openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing*. Let us rejoice, that we are brought into a world, which is the production of infinite goodness, over which a supreme intelligence presides; and where nothing happens, that was not planned and arranged from the beginning, in his decree.

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD.

THIS earth has been the theatre of many a great spectacle, and many a high achievement. There, the wise have ruled, the mighty have fought, and conquerors have triumphed. Its surface has been covered with proud and stately cities. Its temples and palaces have raised their heads to the skies. Its kings and potentates, glorying in their magnificence, have erected pyramids,

mids, constructed towers, founded monuments, which they imagined were to defy all the assaults of time. *Their inward thought was, that their houses were to continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations.* Its philosophers have explored the secrets of nature; and flattered themselves, that the fame of their discoveries was to be immortal.—Alas! all this was no more than a transient shew. Not only the *fashion of the world*, but the world itself, *passeth away*. The day cometh, when all the glory of this world shall be remembered, only as *a dream when one awaketh*. No longer shall the earth exhibit any of those scenes which now delight our eyes. The whole beautiful fabric is thrown down, never more to arise. As soon as the destroying angel has sounded the last trumpet, the everlasting mountains fall; the foundations of the world are shaken; the beauties of nature, the decorations of art, the labours of industry, perish in one common flame. The globe itself shall either return into its ancient chaos, *without form and void*; or, like a star fallen from the heavens, shall be effaced from the universe, and *its place shall know it no more*.

THE NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH.

WE contemplate the dissolution of the world, as the introduction to a greater and nobler system, in the government of God. *We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* Temporal things are now to give place to things eternal. To this earthly habitation is to succeed the city of the living God. The earth had completed the purpose for which it was created. It had been employed as a theatre, on which the human generations were successively to come forth, and to fulfil their term of trial. As long as the period of trial continued, much obscurity was of course to cover the counsels of Providence. It was appointed, that *all things* should appear *as coming alike to all*; that the righteous should seem often neglected by Heaven, and the wicked be allowed externally to prosper; in order that virtue and piety might undergo a proper test; that it might be shewn who were sincere adherents to conscience, and who were mere followers of fortune. The day which terminates the duration of the world, terminates all those seeming disorders. The time of trial is concluded. The final discrimination of characters is made. When the
righteous

righteous go into everlasting happiness, and the wicked are dismissed into the regions of punishment, the whole mystery of human affairs is unravelled, and the conduct of Providence is justified to man.

Suited to a condition of trial was the state and form of the world, which we now inhabit. It was not designed to be a mansion for innocent and happy spirits; but a dwelling for creatures of fallen nature and of mixed characters. Hence, those mixtures of pleasure and pain, of disorder and beauty, with which it abounds. Hence, some regions of the earth, presenting gay and pleasing scenes; others, exhibiting nothing but ruggedness and deformity; the face of nature, sometimes brightened by a serene atmosphere, and a splendid sun; sometimes disfigured by jarring elements, and overcast with troubled skies. But far unlike shall be the everlasting habitations of the just. Though how they are formed, or what objects they contain, is not given us now to conceive, nor, in all probability would our faculties be equal to the conception; the emblematical descriptions of them in Scripture are calculated to excite high ideas of magnificence and glory. This one particular we know with certainty, that *therein dwelleth righteousness*; that is, complete virtue and eternal order; and wherever these are

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found, the most perfect sources are opened of joy and bliss. This earth was never intended for more than the outer court, the porch, through which the righteous were to pass into the temple and sanctuary of the Divinity. *When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.*

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

WITH reverence we contemplate the hand of God in the signal dispensations of Providence among men; deciding the fate of battles; raising up, or overthrowing empires; casting down the proud, and lifting the low from the dust. But what are such occurrences to the power and wisdom which He displays in the higher revolutions of the universe; by his word, forming or dissolving worlds; at his pleasure, transplanting his creatures from one world to another; that he may carry on new plans of wisdom and goodness, and fill all space with the wonders of creation? Successive generations of men have arisen to possess the earth. By turns they have passed away and gone into regions unknown. Us he hath raised up, to occupy their room. We too shall shortly disappear. But
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human existence never perishes. Life only changes its form, and is renewed. Creation is ever filling, but never full. When the whole intended course of the generations of men shall be finished, then, as a shepherd leads his flock from one pasture to another, so the great Creator leads forth the souls which he has made into new and prepared abodes of life. They go from this earth to a new earth, and new heavens; and still they remove only from one province of the divine dominion to another. Amidst all those changes of nature, the great Ruler himself remains *without variableness or shadow of turning*. To him, these successive revolutions of being are but *as yesterday when it is past*. From his eternal throne he beholds worlds rising and passing away; measures out, to the creatures who inhabit them, powers and faculties suited to their state; and distributes among them rewards and punishments, proportioned to their actions.—What an astonishing view do such meditations afford of the kingdom of God; infinite in its extent; everlasting in its duration; exhibiting, in every period, the reign of perfect righteousness and wisdom!

INACTIVITY.

PERSONS in easy circumstances, who are not engaged in any of the laborious occupations of the world, and who are, at the same time, without energy of mind to call them forth into any other line of active exertion, have often so many vacant hours, and are so much at a loss how to fill up their time, that their spirits utterly sink; they become burdensome to themselves, and to every one around them; and drag with pain the load of existence. What a convincing proof is hereby afforded, that man was designed by his Creator to be an active being, whose happiness is to be found not merely in rest, but in occupation and pursuit? The idle are doomed to suffer the natural punishment of their inactivity and folly; and for their complaints of the tiresomeness of life there is no remedy but to awake from the dream of sloth, and to fill up with proper employment the miserable vacancies of their days. Let them study to become useful to the world, and they shall soon become less burdensome to themselves. They shall begin to enjoy existence, and shall reap the rewards which Providence has annexed to virtuous activity.

CHARITY

CONSISTS not in speculative ideas of general benevolence floating in the head, and leaving the heart, as speculations too often do, untouched and cold. Neither is it confined to that indolent good-nature, which makes us rest satisfied with being free from inveterate malice, or ill-will to our fellow-creatures, without prompting us to be of service to any. True charity is an active principle. It is not properly a single virtue; but a disposition residing in the heart, as a fountain whence all the virtues of benignity, candour, forbearance, generosity, compassion, and liberality flow, as so many native streams. From general good-will to all, it extends its influence particularly to those with whom we stand in nearest connexion, and who are directly within the sphere of our good offices. From the country or community to which we belong, it descends to the smaller associations of neighbourhood, relations, and friends; and spreads itself over the whole circle of social and domestic life.

[Charity is the comforter of the afflicted, the protector of the oppressed, the reconciler of differences, the intercessor for offenders. It is

faithfulness in the friend, public spirit in the magistrate, equity and patience in the judge, moderation in the sovereign, and loyalty in the subject. In parents it is care and attention; in children it is reverence and submission. In a word, it is the soul of social life. It is the sun that enlivens and cheers the abodes of men. It is like the dew of Hermon, says the Psalmist, and the dew that descendeth on the mountains of Zion, where the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.]

FAITH.

FAITH, when pure and genuine, supplies to every part of virtue, and in particular to the virtue of charity, many motives and assistances, of which the unbeliever is destitute. He who acts from faith, acts upon the high principle of regard to the God who hath made him, and to the Saviour who redeems him; which will often stimulate him to his duty when other principles of benevolence become faint and languid, or are crossed by opposite interests. When he considers himself as pursuing the approbation of that Divine Being, from whom love descends, a sacred enthusiasm both prompts, and consecrates, his charitable

ritable dispositions. Regardless of men, or of human recompence, he is carried along by a higher impulse. He acts with the spirit of a follower of the Son of God, who not only has enjoined love, but has enforced it by the example of laying down his life for mankind. Hence charity is with him, not only a moral virtue, but a Christian grace. It acquires additional dignity and energy from being connected with the heavenly state and the heavenly inhabitants. He mingles with beings of a higher order, while he is discharging his duty to his fellow-creatures on earth; and by joining faith and piety to good works, he completes the character of a Christian.

NEW YEAR.

IN the commencement of a new year, we are entering on an untried, undiscovered country, where, as each succeeding month comes forward, new scenes may open; new objects may engage our attention; changes at home or abroad, in public or in private affairs, may alter the whole state of our fortune. New connexions may be at hand to be formed, or old ones just about to be dissolved; perhaps we may have little more to do
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with this world, or with any of its connexions; we may be standing on the verge of time and life, and on the point of passing into a new region of existence. In short, the prospect before us is full of awful uncertainty. Life and death, prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, joy and trouble, lie in one undistinguishable mass, where our eye can descry nothing through the obscurity that wraps them up.

PROVIDENCE.

THE first view under which human affairs present themselves to us, is that of confused and irregular succession. The events of the world seem thrown together by chance, like the billows of the sea, tumbling and tossing over each other, without rule or order. All that is apparent to us is the fluctuation of human caprice, and the operation of human passions. We see the strife of ambition, and the efforts of stratagem, labouring to accomplish their several purposes among the societies of men. But it is no more than the surface, the outside of things that we behold. Higher counsels than it is in our power to trace, are concerned in the transactions of the world. If we believe in God at all, as the Governor

vernor of the universe, we must believe that, without his providence, nothing happens on earth. He over-rules, at his pleasure, the passions of men. He bends all their designs into subserviency to his decree. *He makes the wrath of man to praise him; and restrains, in what measure he thinks fit, the remainder of wrath.* He brings forth in their course all the generations of men. When the time is come for their entering into light, they appear on the stage; and when the time fixed for their dismissal arrives, he *changes their countenance*, and sends them away. The time of our appearing is now come, after our ancestors had left their place, and gone down to the dust. We are at present permitted to act our part freely and without constraint. No violence is done to our inclination or choice. But assuredly there is not a day of our life, nor an event in that day, but was foreseen by God. That succession of occurrences, which to us is full of obscurity and darkness, is all light and order in his view. He sees from the beginning to the end; and brings forward every thing that happens, in its due time and place.

FUTU-

FUTURITY.

THE most common propensity of mankind is to store futurity with whatever is agreeable to them; especially in those periods of life when imagination is lively, and hope is ardent. Looking forward, they are ready to promise themselves much from the foundations of prosperity which they have laid; from the friendships and connexions which they have secured; from the plans of conduct which they have formed. Alas! how deceitful do all these dreams of happiness often prove! While many are saying in secret to their hearts, *To-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundantly*, we are obliged in return to say to them, *Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*. I do not mean, that in the unknown prospect which lies before us, we should forbode to ourselves nothing but misfortunes.—May it be the pleasure of Heaven that this year run on in a placid and tranquil tenor to us all!—But this I say, that in such foresight of futurity as we are allowed to take, we may reckon upon it as certain, that this year shall prove to us, as many past have proved, a chequered scene of some comforts and some troubles. In what proportion one or other of these shall prevail in it; whether when it ends,
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it shall leave with us the memory of joys or of sorrows, is to be determined by him in whose hands *our times are*. Our wisdom is, to be prepared to receive comforts with thankfulness, troubles with fortitude; and to improve both for the great purposes of virtue and eternal life.

LONG LIFE.

TO enjoy long life, and see many days, is the universal wish; and, as the wish is prompted by nature, it cannot be in itself unlawful. At the same time, several circumstances concur to temper the eagerness of this wish; and to shew us that it should always be formed under due submission to the wiser judgment of Heaven. Who among us can tell whether, in wishing for the continuance of many years on earth, we may not be only wishing for a prolongation of distress and misery?—You might live, my friends, till you had undergone lingering rounds of severe pain, from which death would have proved a seasonable deliverance. You might live till your breasts were pierced with many a wound, from public calamities or private sorrows. You might live till you beheld the death of all whom you had loved; till you survived all those who love you;
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till you were left as desolate strangers on earth, in the midst of a new race, who neither knew you, nor cared for you, but who wished you off the stage.—Of a nature so ambiguous are all the prospects which life sets before us, that in every wish we form, relating to them, much reason we have to be satisfied that our times are in the hands of God, rather than our own.

CONSOLATION.

THE life of man on earth is doomed to be clouded with various evils. Throughout all ranks the afflicted form a considerable proportion of the human race; and even they who have a title to be called prosperous, are always, in some periods of their life, obliged to drink from the cup of bitterness. The Christian religion is particularly entitled to our regard, by accommodating itself with great tenderness to this distressed condition of mankind. It is not to be considered as merely an authoritative system of precepts. The same voice which enjoins our duty, utters the words of consolation. The gospel deserves to be held a dispensation of relief to mankind under both the temporal and spiritual distresses of their state.

COM-

COMFORT TO THE PENITENT.

CHRIST affords rest to the disturbed mind that labours under apprehensions and fears of guilt. Let those who suffer distress of this nature *come to Christ*, with contrition and repentance, and they shall regain quietness and peace. Foolish and guilty they have been, and justly lie under dread of punishment; but the penitent sorrow which they now feel implies their disposition to be changed. It implies, as far as it is genuine, that, sensible of their folly, they now desire to become good and wise; and are determined for the future to hold a virtuous course, could they only hope to obtain pardon for the past. In this situation of mind, let them not be cast down and despair. Christ has brought with him from heaven the olive-branch. He carries in his hand the signal of forgiveness. Insufficient though our own repentance be, to procure pardon from Heaven, we are informed, that an all-sufficient atonement has been made by Christ. Neither the number nor the atrocity of offences excludes from forgiveness, the penitent who returns to his duty. To all who come under this description, the offer of mercy extends, without exception.

This discovery of divine government, afforded by the Gospel, is perfectly calculated to scatter the gloom which had overcast the desponding heart. The atmosphere clears up on every side; and is illuminated by cheering rays of celestial mercy. Not only is hope given to the penitent, but it is rendered sinful not to indulge that hope. We are not only allowed and encouraged, but we are commanded to trust in the divine clemency. We are commanded to believe that *none who come unto Christ he will in any wise cast out*. Such is the relief which the religion of Christ brings to them who labour and are heavy laden under the impressions of guilt and divine displeasure.

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION.

WHILE bad men trace, in the calamities with which they are visited, the hand of an offended Sovereign, Christians are taught to view them as the well-intended chastisements of a merciful Father. They hear amidst them, that still voice which a good conscience brings to their ear: *Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God*. They apply to themselves the comfortable promises with which the Gospel abounds. They discover in these the happy issue decreed

decreed to their troubles ; and wait with patience till Providence shall have accomplished its great and good designs. In the mean time, devotion opens to them its blessed and holy sanctuary : that sanctuary in which the wounded heart is healed, and the weary mind is at rest ; where the cares of the world are forgotten, where its tumults are hushed, and its miseries disappear ; where greater objects open to our view than what the world presents ; where a more serene sky shines, and a sweeter and calmer light beams on the afflicted heart. In those moments of devotion, a pious man, pouring out his wants and sorrows to an Almighty Supporter, feels that he is not left solitary and forsaken in a vale of woe. God is with him ; Christ and the Holy Ghost are with him ; and, though he should be bereaved of every earthly friend, he can look up in heaven to a Friend who will never die.

To these present consolations, the religion of Christ adds the joyful prospect of that future state, where eternal *rest remaineth for the people of God*. This life they are taught to consider as only the *house of their pilgrimage* ; the temporary mansion of painful though necessary discipline. But let them endure for a little, and the pilgrimage shall end, the discipline shall be finished ; and all the virtuous be assembled in those blissful regions which

are prepared for their reward. Such a prospect cheers the darkest hours of life; and affords a remedy to every trouble. *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.* They appear, in this comparative view, as no more than a distressing dream of the night, from which one awakes into health, and light, and joy.

PRACTICAL ATHEISM.

AS soon as the sense of a Supreme Being is lost, the great check is taken off, which keeps under restraint the passions of men. Mean desires, and low pleasures, take place of the greater and nobler sentiments which reason and religion inspire. Amidst the tumult of *the wine and the feast*, all proper views of human life are forgotten. The duties which, as men, they have to perform, the part they have to act in the world, and the distresses to which they are exposing themselves, are banished from their thoughts. *To-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundantly*, is the only voice. Inflamed by society, and circulated from one loose companion to another, the spirit of riot grows and swells, till it ends in brutal excess.

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Nourished by repetition and habit, these disorders grow up among too many, to become the business and occupation of life. By these unfortunate votaries of pleasure, they are accounted essential to happiness. Life appears to stagnate without them. Having no resource within themselves, their spirits sink, and their very being seems annihilated, till the return of their favourite pleasures awaken within them some transient sparkles of joy.—Idleness, ease, and prosperity, have too natural a tendency to generate the follies and vices now described. *Because they have no changes, said the Psalmist, therefore they fear not God.*

SENSE OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

A PREVAILING sense of God on the mind is to be ever held the surest guard of innocence and virtue, amidst the allurements of pleasure. It is the salutary mixture which must be infused into the cup of joy, in order to render it safe and innoxious.

This sense of God should lead us, in the language of the prophet, *to regard the work of the Lord, and to consider the operation of his hands;*

which expressions may be understood as requiring us to have God upon our thoughts under two views; *to regard his work*, as the Author of nature; and *to consider the operation of his hands*, as the Governor of the world.

THE GOD OF NATURE.

LIFT your view to that immense arch of heaven which encompasses you above. Behold the sun in all his splendor rolling over your head by day; and the moon, by night, in mild and serene majesty, surrounded with that host of stars which present to your imagination an innumerable multitude of worlds. Listen to the awful voice of thunder—Listen to the roar of the tempest and the ocean. Survey the wonders that fill the earth which you inhabit. Contemplate a steady and powerful Hand, bringing round spring and summer, autumn and winter, in regular course; decorating this earth with innumerable beauties, diversifying it with innumerable inhabitants pouring forth comforts on all that live; and, at the same time, overawing the nations with the violence of the elements, when it pleases the Creator to let them forth.—After you have viewed yourselves as surrounded with such a scene of wonders—after you have beheld
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on every hand, such an astonishing display of majesty united with wisdom and goodness—are you not seized with solemn and serious awe? Is there not something which whispers you within, that to this great Créator reverence and homage are due by all the rational beings whom he has made? Admitted to be spectators of his works, placed in the midst of so many great and interesting objects, can you believe that you were brought hither for no purpose, but to immerse yourselves in gross and brutal, or, at best, in trifling pleasures; lost to all sense of the wonders you behold; lost to all reverence of that God who gave you being, and who has erected this amazing fabric of nature, on which you look only with stupid and unmeaning eyes?—No: Let the scenes which you behold prompt correspondent feelings. Let them awaken you from the degrading intoxication of licentiousness, into nobler emotions. Every object which you view in nature, whether great or small, serves to instruct you. The star and the insect, the fiery meteor and the flower of spring, the verdant field and the lofty mountain, all exhibit a Supreme Power, before which you ought to tremble and adore; all preach the doctrine, all inspire the spirit, of devotion and reverence. *Regarding, then, the work of the Lord,* let rising emotions of awe and gratitude call forth from your souls such

such sentiments as these:—" Lord, wherever I
" am, and whatever I enjoy, may I never forget
" thee, as the Author of nature! May I never
" forget that I am thy creature and thy subject!
" In this magnificent temple of the universe,
" where thou hast placed me, may I ever be thy
" faithful worshipper, and may the reverence
" and the fear of God be the first sentiments of
" my heart!"

LAWFUL PLEASURE.

HUMAN life is full of troubles. We are
all tempted to alleviate them as much as
we can, by freely enjoying the pleasurable mo-
ments which Providence thinks fit to allow us.
Enjoy them we may: But, if we would enjoy
them safely, and enjoy them long, let us temper
them with the fear of God. As soon as this is
forgotten and obliterated, the sound of *the harp*
and the viol is changed into the signal of death.
The serpent comes forth from the roses where it
had lain in ambush, and gives the fatal sting.
Pleasure in moderation is the cordial, in excess it
is the bane, of life.

THE FOUNTAIN OF HAPPINESS.

ALL happiness assuredly dwells with God. The *fountain of life* is justly said to be *with him*. That Supreme and Independent Being must necessarily possess within himself every principle of beatitude; and no cause from without can possibly affect his untroubled felicity. Among created dependent beings, happiness flows in scattered and feeble streams; streams that are often tinged with the blackness of misery. But from before the throne of God issues the river of life, full, unmixed, and pure; and the pleasures which now in scanty portions we are permitted to taste, are all derived from that source. Whatever gladdens the hearts of men or angels, with any real and satisfactory joy, comes from Heaven. It is a portion of the *pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty*; a ray *issuing from the brightness of the everlasting life*. It is manifest, therefore, that every approach to God must be an approach to felicity: and that the enjoyment of his immediate presence must be its consummation.

GOD

GOD IS LIGHT.

THE revelation of his presence infers, of course, a complete diffusion of light and knowledge among all who partake of that presence. This unquestionably forms a primary ingredient of happiness. Ignorance, or the want of light, is the source of all our present misconduct, and all our misfortunes. The heart of man is dark; and in the darkness of his heart is the seat of his corruption. He is unable to discern what is truly good. Perpetually employed in search of happiness, he is perpetually misled by false appearances of it. The errors of his understanding impose upon his passions; and, in consequence of the wrong direction which his passions take, he is betrayed into a thousand disorders. But once open to him the perfect sources of knowledge and truth; suppose him placed in the presence of that God who is *Light*; suppose him illuminated by light derived immediately from the Supreme Being; presently all his former errors would fly away, as mists are dispelled by the rising sun. His whole nature would be changed and reformed. Rectitude and virtue, would take entire possession of his heart. Angels are happier than men, because they enjoy more enlarged knowledge and views; because they

they labour under none of our unhappy deceptions ; but see the truth as it is in itself ; see it, as it is in God. Sharing the same light which illuminates them, good men, in a future state, will share in their felicity.

Moreover, the light that flows from the presence of Him who is the original source of light, not only banishes miseries which were the effects of former darkness, but also confers the most exquisite enjoyment. The knowledge afforded us at present is imperfect and unsatisfactory. Narrow is the sphere within which the mind can see at all ; and even there it can see only *darkly as through a glass*. But when it shall be enlarged beyond this dusky territory, let loose from this earthly prison, and in *God's light* permitted to *see light*, the most magnificent and glorious spectacles must open to the view of the purified spirit.—What must it be to behold the whole stupendous scene of nature unveiled, and its hidden mysteries disclosed ! To trace the wise and just government of the Almighty, through all those intricacies which had so long perplexed us ! To behold his hand conducting ten thousand worlds, which are now unknown to us ; and throughout all the regions of boundless space, to view wisdom and goodness perpetually acting, and diversifying its operations in forms of endless variety ! Well may such

such discoveries inspire that song of the blessed, which the Apostle John heard *as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thonderings, saying, Alleluia! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints!*

GOD IS LOVE.

HIS presence must of course diffuse love among all who are permitted to dwell in it. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Were man a single, solitary being, the full enjoyment of light might suffice for his happiness; as the perfection of knowledge would rectify and improve to the highest all his faculties. But, both here and hereafter, he is connected with other beings. Heaven implies a society; and the felicity of that society is constituted by the perfection of love and goodness, flowing from the presence of the God of Love.

Hence follows the entire purification of human nature from all those malevolent passions, which

which have so long rendered our abode on earth the abode of misery. We greatly deceive ourselves, when we charge our chief distresses merely to the account of our external condition in the world. The worst evils of our present condition arise from the want of goodness and love; from the disorders of selfish passions; from the irritation which these occasion when working within ourselves, and the distress which they produce when breaking out upon us from others. Could you banish distrust, craft, and uncharitableness, from the earth, and form all mankind into an assembly of the just and the benevolent; could you inspire every heart with kind affections, and render every one friendly and generous to his neighbour; you would banish at once the most afflictive tribe of human evils. Seldom would the voice of complaint be heard. All nature would assume a different aspect. Cheerfulness would be seen in every countenance. Paradise would return. The wilderness would smile; *the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.*—Now such are the effects which the presence of the God of Love must produce on the inhabitants above.—*Beholding his glory, they are changed into the same image.* In that temple of eternal love, which his presence has hallowed and consecrated, no sound but the voice of harmony is ever heard; no ap-

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pearances ever present themselves—but those of peace and joy.

IDLE CURIOSITY.

THAT idle curiosity, that inquisitive and meddling spirit, which leads men to pry into the affairs of their neighbours, is reprehensible on three accounts.

It interrupts the order, and breaks the peace of society. In this world we are linked together by many ties. We are bound by duty, and we are prompted by interest, to give mutual assistance, and to perform friendly offices to each other. But those friendly offices are performed to most advantage, when we avoid to interfere unnecessarily in the concerns of our neighbour. Every man has his own part to act, has his own interest to consult, has affairs of his own to manage, which his neighbour has no call to scrutinize. Human life then proceeds in its most natural and orderly train, when every one keeps within the bounds of his proper province; when, as long as his pursuits are fair and lawful, he is allowed, without disturbance, to conduct them in his own way.

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This spirit of meddling curiosity also nourishes, among individuals who are addicted to it, a multitude of bad passions. Its most frequent source is mere idleness, which, in itself a vice, never fails to engender many vices more. The mind of man cannot be long without some food to nourish the activity of its thoughts. The idle, who have no nourishment of this sort within themselves, feed their thoughts with inquiries into the conduct of their neighbours. The inquisitive and curious are always talkative. What they learn, or fancy themselves to have learned, concerning others, they are generally in haste to divulge. A tale which the malicious have invented, and the credulous have propagated; a rumour which, arising among the multitude, and transmitted by one to another, has, in every step of its progress, gained fresh additions, becomes in the end the foundation of confident assertion, and of rash and severe judgment.

It is often by a spirit of jealousy and rivalry, that the researches of such persons are prompted. They wish to discover something that will bring down their neighbour's character, circumstances, or reputation, to the level of their own; or that will flatter them with an opinion of their own superiority. A secret malignity lies at the bottom of their inquiries, even though it may be

veiled with the appearance of a friendly concern for the interests of others, and with affected apologies for their failings.

It is to be farther observed, that all impertinent curiosity about the affairs of others tends greatly to obstruct personal reformation; as it draws men's thoughts aside from what ought to be the chief object of attention, the improvement of their own heart and life. They who are so officiously occupied about their neighbours, have little leisure, and less inclination, to observe their own defects, or to mind their own duty. From their inquisitive researches, they find, or imagine they find, in the behaviour of others, an apology for their own failings: and the favourite result of their inquiries generally is, to rest satisfied with themselves. The condemnation which they pass on the vices of their neighbours, they interpret to be a sentiment of virtue in themselves. They become those hypocrites described by our Lord, who see clearly *the mote that is in their neighbour's eye, while they discern not the beam that is in their own.*

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

THE example of Christ exhibits the great model on which our conduct ought to be formed. Examples have great influence on all. But by all human examples, we are in danger of being occasionally misled. We are ever obliged to be on our guard, lest the admiration of what is estimable betray us into a resemblance of what is blemished and faulty. For the most perfect human characters, in the midst of their brightness and beauty, are always marked with some of those dark spots which stain the nature of man. But our Lord possessed all the virtues of the greatest and best men, without partaking any of their defects. In him, all was light without a shade, and beauty without a stain.— At the same time, his example is attended with this singular advantage, of being more accommodated than any other to general imitation. It was distinguished by no unnatural austerities, no affected singularities; but exhibits the plain and simple tenor of all those virtues for which we have most frequent occasion in ordinary life. In order to render it of more universal benefit, our Lord fixed his residence in no particular place;

he tied himself down to no particular calling or way of living; but gives us the opportunity of viewing his behaviour, in that variety of lights which equally and indifferently regard all mankind. His life was divided between the retired and the active state. Devotion and business equally shared it. In the discharge of that high office with which he was vested, we behold the perfect model of a public character; and we behold the most beautiful example of private life, when we contemplate him among his disciples, as a father in the midst of his family.—By such means he has exhibited before us specimens of every kind of virtue; and to all ranks and classes of men has afforded a pattern after which they may copy. Hardly is there any emergency which can occur in life, but from some incident in our Saviour's conduct, from some feature displayed in his character, we are enabled to say to ourselves, "Thus Christ would have spoken, thus he would have acted, thus he would have suffered, if he had been circumstanced as we are now."

MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE.

THE monarchy of the universe is a great and complicated system. It comprehends numberless generations of men, who are brought forth to act their parts for purposes unknown to us. It includes two worlds at once; the world that now is, and which is only a small portion of existence; and a world that is to come, which endures for eternity. To us, no more than the beginnings of things are visible. We see only some broken parts of a great whole. We trace but a few links of that chain of being, which, by secret connexions, binds together the present and the future. Such knowledge is afforded us as is sufficient for supplying the exigencies and wants of our present state; but it does no more. Peeping abroad from a dark corner of the universe, we attempt in vain to explore the counsels that govern the world. It is an attempt to sound an unfathomable deep with a scanty line; and with a feeble wing to ascend above the stars. In any complicated work, even of human art, it is found necessary to be acquainted with the design of the whole, in order to judge of the fitness of its parts. In a scheme so complex as the administration of the world, where all the parts refer to one another, and where what is seen is often sub-

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ordinate to what is invisible, how is it possible but our judgments must be often erroneous, and our complaints ill-founded? If a peasant or a cottager be incapable of judging of the government of a mighty empire, is it surprising that we should be at a loss concerning the conduct of the Almighty towards his creatures?

USES OF THE OBSCURITY OF PROVIDENCE.

COMplete information respecting the ways of God, not only was not to be expected here; but, moreover, that it would have been hurtful, if granted to us in our present state. It would have proved inconsistent with that state; with the actions which we have to perform in it, and the duties we have to fulfil. It would indeed have overthrown the whole design of our being placed in this world. We are placed here under the trial of our virtue. Ignorance of the events that are ordained to befall us, ignorance of the plans and the decrees of Heaven, enter necessarily into a state of trial. In order to exercise both our intellectual and moral powers, and to carry them forward to improvement, we must be left to find our way in the midst of difficulties

and doubts, of hardships and sufferings. We must be taught to act our part with constancy, though the reward of our constancy be distant. We must learn to bear with patience whatever our Creator judges proper to lay upon us, though we see not the reason of the hardships he inflicts. If we were let into the secret of the whole plan of Providence; if the justice of Heaven were, in every step of its procedure, made manifest to our view, man would no longer be the creature he now is, nor would his present state answer any purpose of discipline or trial.

Mystery and darkness, therefore, must of necessity now take place in the course of things. Our present state can be no other than a state of twilight or dawn, where dubious forms shall often present themselves to us, and where we shall find ourselves in a middle condition between complete light and total darkness. Had we enjoyed no evidence of a just Judge ruling the earth, and of his providence interposing in our affairs, virtue would have been altogether deprived of its encouragement and support. Had the evidence, on the other hand, been so strong as to place the hand of the Almighty constantly before our eyes, the intention of our present existence would have been defeated, and no trial of virtue have remained. Instead, therefore, of complaining of
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the obscurity which at present covers the conduct of Providence, we see that, on the whole, we have reason to submit and adore.

DARK PROVIDENCES ILLUSTRATED.

IT often happens that the consequences of things throw light on the designs of God. The history of Providence, in proportion as it advances, disembroils itself. Thus, in the public affairs of the world, it has been frequently seen, that from the most unpromising causes important and beneficent effects have, in the sequel, arisen. In our own country, at one period, the violent passions of a prince gave beginning to the Reformation. At another period, arbitrary attempts against religion and liberty occasioned that happy Revolution which has formed the æra of national prosperity. In many instances, *the wrath of man* has been made to *praise God*. Those wars and commotions that shake the moral world have answered similar purposes with tempests in the natural world, of purging the air from noxious vapours, and restoring it to a temperature more sound and wholesome. From the midst of confusion, order has been made to spring; and from temporary mischiefs, lasting advan-

advantages to arise.—In all cases of this nature, with which sacred and civil history abounds, secret designs of Heaven were going on, which were unfolded in the end. The wheel was always in motion. The hand of the clock was advancing with unperceived progress, till the moment came of its striking the appointed hour.

In like manner, with respect to individuals, there is often a *hereafter* in the course of their lives, which discloses and justifies the ways of God. Not to mention the good effects which misfortunes are found to produce on the minds of men, by checking their vices, and correcting their errors, innumerable exemplifications can be given, of misfortunes paving their way to future advancement in the world. Consider only in how different a light the Patriarch Joseph would view the events of his life after he had seen in what they had terminated, from the light in which he saw them, when led away by the Ishmaelites as a slave, or when thrown by Potiphar into the Egyptian prison. We murmur against Providence, just as the impetuous youth frets against his instructors and tutors, who are keeping him under a strict, and as he thinks a needless, discipline. He knows not that, by their instruction and discipline, they are laying the foundation of his future fortunes. What may justly be said to him

him by his tutors and instructors, is equally applicable to us all under our present state of education; *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

THE SLAVERY OF VICE.

VICE is inconsistent with liberty, as it deprives sinners of the power of free choice, by bringing them under the dominion of passions and habits. Religion and virtue address themselves to reason. They call us to look round on every side; to think well of the consequences of our actions; and, before we take any step of importance, to compare the good with the evil that may ensue from it. He, therefore, who follows their dictates, acts the part of a man who freely consults, and chooses, for his own interest. But vice can make no pretensions of this kind. It awaits not the test of deliberate comparison and choice; but overpowers us at once by some striking impression of present advantage or enjoyment. It hurries us with the violence of passion; captivates us by the allurements of pleasure; or dazzles us by the glare of riches. The sinner yields to the impulse, merely because he cannot resist it. Reason remonstrates; conscience endeavours

deavours to check him ; but all in vain. Having once allowed some strong passion to gain the ascendant, he has thrown himself into the middle of a torrent, against which he may sometimes faintly struggle, but the impetuosity of the stream bears him along. In this situation he is so far from being free, that he is not master of himself. He does not go, but is driven ; tossed, agitated, and impelled ; passive, like a ship to the violence of the waves.

After passion has for a while exercised its tyrannical sway, its vehemence may by degrees subside. But when, by long indulgence, it has established habits of gratification, the sinner's bondage becomes then more confirmed, and more miserable. How many slaves do we see in the world to intemperance, and all kinds of criminal pleasure, merely through the influence of customs which they had allowed to become so inveterate that it was not in their power to alter them ? Are they not often reduced to a condition so wretched, that when their licentious pleasures have become utterly insipid, they are still forced to continue them, solely because they cannot refrain ; not because the indulgence gives them pleasure, but because abstinence would give them pain ; and this too, even when they are obliged at last to condemn their habits of life, as injuring their
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fortune, impairing their constitution, or disgracing their character? Vice is not of such a nature that we can say to it, *Hitherto shalt thou come and no further*. No man who has once yielded up the government of his mind, and given loose rein to his desires and passions, can tell now far these may carry him.

PROPRIETY OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

IF there exist a Supreme Being, the Creator of the world, no consequence appears more natural and direct than this, that he ought to be worshipped by his creatures, with every outward expression of submission and honour. We need only appeal to every man's heart, whether this be not a principle which carries along with it its own obligation, that to Him who is the Fountain of our life and the Father of our mercies; to Him who has raised up that beautiful structure of the universe in which we dwell, and where we are surrounded with so many blessings and comforts; solemn acknowledgments of gratitude should be made, praises and prayers should be offered, and all suitable marks of dependence on him be expressed.—This obligation extends beyond the silent and secret sentiments of our hearts.

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Besides private devotion, it naturally leads to associations for public worship; to open and declared professions of respect for the Deity. Where blessings are received in common, an obligation lies upon the community, jointly to acknowledge them. Sincere gratitude is always of an open and diffusive nature. It loves to pour itself forth; to give free vent to its emotions; and, before the world, to acknowledge and honour a Benefactor.

UTILITY OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

WHEN we survey the general state of mankind, we find them continually immersed in worldly affairs; busied about providing the necessities of life, occupied in the pursuits of their pleasures, or eagerly prosecuting the advancement of their interests. In such a situation of things, a small measure of reflection might convince any one, that without some returns of sacred days, and some solemn calls to public worship, it were impossible to preserve in the world any sense of objects, so foreign to the general current of thought, as an invisible Governor, and a future state. If it be of importance to the peace and good order of society, that there should

prevail among men the belief of One in the heavens, who is the protector of righteousness and the avenger of crimes, if it be of importance that they be taught to look forward to a day of judgment, when they are to be brought to account for their most secret actions, and eternally rewarded or punished, according as their conduct has been good or evil ; if such principles as these, I say, be of consequence to the public welfare, they certainly enforce the authority of public worship, and prove the necessity of religious instruction.

ENDS OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

THE ends for which we assemble in the house of God are two ; to worship God, and to listen to religious instructions.

The public worship of God is the chief and most sacred purpose of every religious assembly of Christians. Let it here be remembered, that it is not the uttering, or the hearing of certain words, that constitutes the worship of the Almighty. It is the heart that praises or prays. If the heart accompany not the words that are spoken or heard, *we offer the sacrifice of fools.* By
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the inattentive thought, and the giddy and wandering eye, we profane the temple of the Lord, and turn the appearance of devotion into insult and mockery.

With regard to religious instruction, attention and reverence are unquestionably due. All religious and moral knowledge comes from God. It is a light from heaven, first transmitted to man by the original constitution of his nature, and afterwards made to shine with fairer and fuller lustre by the revelation of the gospel in Jesus Christ. Its brightness may sometimes be stronger, and sometimes weaker, according to the mediums by which it is conveyed. But still, as far as the instructions delivered from the pulpit are illuminated by the ray from heaven, they are the truths of God, and ought to be received as such. Refinements of vain philosophy, or intricate subtilties of theological controversy, are undoubtedly not entitled to such regard. But when the great principles of natural or revealed religion are discussed; when the important doctrines of the gospel concerning the life, and sufferings, and death of our blessed Redeemer are displayed; or useful instructions regarding the regulation of life, and the proper discharge of our several duties, are the subjects brought into view; it is not then

the human speaker, but the divine authority, that is to be regarded.

HUMAN VICISSITUDES.

THE *fashion of the world passeth away*, as the opinions, ideas, and manners of men are always changing. We look in vain for a standard to ascertain and fix any of these; in vain expect that what has been approved and established for a while, is always to endure. Principles which were of high authority among our ancestors are now exploded. Systems of philosophy which were once universally received, and taught as infallible truths, are now obliterated and forgotten. Modes of living, behaving, and employing time, the pursuits of the busy, and the entertainments of the gay, have been entirely changed.—As one wave effaces the ridge which the former had made on the sand by the sea shore, so every succeeding age obliterates the opinions and modes of the age which had gone before it.

Let us only think of the changes which our own ideas and opinions undergo in the progress of life. One man differs not more from another, than the same man varies from himself in different

ferent periods of his age, and in different situations of fortune. In youth, and in opulence, every thing appears smiling and gay. We fly as on the wings of fancy; and survey beauties wherever we cast our eye. But let some more years have passed over our heads, or let disappointments in the world have depressed our spirits; and what a change takes place? The pleasing illusions that once shone before us; the splendid fabrics that imagination had reared; the enchanting maze in which we once wandered with delight, all vanish and are forgotten. The world itself remains the same. But its form, its appearance, and aspect, is changed to our view; its *fashion*, as to us, hath *passed away*.

TRANSITORINESS OF LIFE.

THE world is made up of unceasing rounds of transitory existence. Some generations are coming forward into being, and others hastening to leave it. The stream which carries us all along is ever flowing with a quick current, though with a still and noiseless course. The dwelling place of man is continually emptying, and by a fresh succession of inhabitants, continually filling anew. *The memory of man passeth away*

away like the remembrance of a guest who hath tarried but one night.

As the life of man, considered in its duration, thus fleets and passes away, so, during the time it lasts, its condition is perpetually changing. It affords us nothing on which we can set up our rest; no enjoyment or possession which we can properly call our own. When we have begun to be placed in such circumstances as we desired, and with our lives to proceed in the same agreeable tenor, how often comes some unexpected event across to disconcert all our schemes of happiness? Our health declines; our friends die; our families are scattered; something or other is not long of occurring, to shew us that the wheel must turn round; *the fashion of the world must pass away.*

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD.

GOD never changes. Amidst the unceasing vicissitude of earthly things, there remains at the head of the universe an eternal Protector of virtue, whose *throne is established for ever.* With him there is *no variableness, neither any shadow of turning*; no inconstancy of purpose, and
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no decay of wisdom or of power. We know that he loved righteousness from the beginning of days, and that he will continue to love it unalterably to the last. Foreseen by him was every revolution which the course of ages has produced. All the changes which happen in the state of nature, or the life of men, were comprehended in his decree. How much soever worldly things may change in themselves, they are all united in his plan; they constitute one great system or whole, of which he is the Author; and which, at its final completion, shall appear to be perfect. His dominion holds together, in a continued chain, the successive variety of human events; gives stability to things that in themselves are fluctuating; gives constancy even to the *fashion of the world* while it is *passing away*. Wherefore, though all things change on earth, and we ourselves be involved in the general mutability, yet as long as, with trust and hope, we look up to the Supreme Being, we rest on the *rock of ages*, and are safe amidst every change. We possess a fortress to which we can have recourse in all dangers; a refuge under all storms; a *dwelling place in all generations*.

ON MEDITATION.

REFLECTION and meditation allay the workings of many unquiet passions; and place us at a distance from the tumults of the world. When the mind has either been ruffled or cast down, an intercourse with God and heaven we find a sanctuary to which we can retreat. In the hours of contemplation and devotion, a good man enjoys himself in peace. He beholds nobler objects than what worldly men can behold. He assumes a higher character.—He listens to the voice of nature and of God; and from this holy sanctuary comes forth with a mind fortified against the little disturbances of the world.

TRANQUILLITY.

THE three great enemies to tranquillity are, Vice, Superstition, and Idleness: Vice, which poisons and disturbs the mind with bad passions; Superstition, which fills it with imaginary terrors; Idleness, which loads it with tediousness and disgust. It is only by following the path which Eternal Wisdom has pointed out, that

that we can arrive at the blessed temple of Tranquillity, and obtain a station there: By doing, or at least endeavouring to do, our duty to God and man; by acquiring a humble trust in the mercy and favour of God through Jesus Christ; by cultivating our minds, and properly employing our time and thoughts; by governing our passions and our temper; by correcting all unreasonable expectations from the world, and from men; and, in the midst of worldly business, habituating ourselves to calm retreat and serious recollection. By such means as these it may be hoped, that, through the divine blessing, our days shall flow in a stream as unruffled as the human state admits. *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. But the work of righteousness is peace; and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever.*

SIN THE SOURCE OF SORROW.

SIN is the source of all our miseries. It may sometimes assume the gentler names of folly, irregularity, or levity; but under whatever form it appears, it always imports a deviation from that sacred law which ought to regulate our conduct. It is still *the root that beareth gall and worm-wood;*

wood; and in exact proportion to the quantity of this poisonous weed, which we ourselves have infused into our cup, we must expect to drink the waters of bitterness. Indeed, of every evil which we now endure, of those evils which we look upon to be the appointment of Providence, as well as of others, sin is ultimately the cause; as it was man's revolt from God, which gave rise originally to those evils, and which rendered the chastisements we undergo, in this state of discipline, necessary, even for the *sons of God*. To Providence, then, let us look up with reverence. On sin let our indignation be vented; and, what is of more consequence, against sin and all its approaches, let our utmost caution be employed. As we proceed through the different paths of life, let us accustom ourselves to beware of sin, as the hidden snake lurking among the grass, from whose fatal touch we must fly in haste, if we would not experience its sting.—Too many have no just apprehensions of this danger. *Fools*, said the wise man, *make a mock at sin*. A fool indeed he must be, who dares to think lightly of it.

THE SOURCE OF EVIL.

BOTH good and evil come from the hand of God. A little reflection may convince us, that in God's world, neither good nor evil can happen by chance. If there were any one moment, in which God quitted the reins of the universe, and suffered any power to interfere with his administration, it is evident, that from that moment, the measures of his government must become disjointed and incomplete. He who governs all things, must govern continually; and govern the least things as well as the greatest. *He never slumbers nor sleeps.* There are no void spaces, no broken plans, in his administration; no blessings that drop upon us without his intention; nor any crosses that visit us, unsent by him.

How it has come to pass, that this life should contain such a mixture of goods and evils, and that the mixture too should be of God's appointment, gives rise to a difficult enquiry. For how can any thing but what is good proceed from the God of love? Can darkness issue from the source of light? or can it be any satisfaction to the *Father of mercies*, to behold the sorrows of creatures whom he has made?—Here there was

room for much perplexity, till revelation informed us, that the mixture of evils in man's estate is owing to man himself. Had he continued as God originally made him, he would have received nothing but good from his Creator. His apostasy and corruption opened the gates of the tabernacle of darkness. Misery issued forth, and has ever since pursued him. In the present condition of his nature, that misery is partly punishment, partly trial. He is become incapable of bearing uninterrupted prosperity; and by the mixture of evils in his lot, merciful designs are carried on for his improvement and restoration.

FRIENDSHIP.

FRRIENDSHIPS, early contracted, retain to the last a tenderness and warmth, seldom possessed by friendships that are formed in the riper periods of life. The remembrance of ancient and youthful connexions melts every human heart; and the dissolution of them is, perhaps, the most painful feeling to which we are exposed here below.—But at whatever period of life friendships are formed, as long as they continue sincere and affectionate, they form, undoubtedly, one of the greatest blessings we can enjoy. By

the pleasing communication of all our sentiments which they prompt, they are justly said to double our pleasures, and to divide our sorrows. They give a brighter sunshine to the gay incidents of life; and they enlighten the gloom of its darker hours. *A faithful friend*, it is justly and beautifully said, by one of the Apocryphal writers, *is the medicine of life*. A variety of occasions happen, when to pour forth the heart to one whom we love and trust, is the chief comfort, perhaps the only relief, we can enjoy. Miserable is he who, shut up within the narrow inclosure of selfish interest, has no person to whom he can at all times, with full confidence, expand his soul.

FIDELITY.

DESERT not your friend in danger or distress. Too many there are in the world, whose attachment to those they call their friends is confined to the day of their prosperity. As long as that continues, they are, or appear to be, affectionate and cordial. But as soon as their friend is under a cloud, they begin to withdraw, and to separate their interests from his. In friendships of this sort, the heart, assuredly, has never

had much concern. For the great test of true friendship, is constancy in the hour of danger, adherence in the season of distress.—When your friend is calumniated, then is the time openly and boldly to espouse his cause. When his situation is changed, or his fortunes are falling, then is the time of affording prompt and zealous aid. When sickness or infirmity occasions him to be neglected by others, that is the opportunity which every real friend will seize, of redoubling all the affectionate attentions which love suggests. These are the important duties, the sacred claims of friendship, which religion and virtue enforce on every worthy mind.—To shew yourselves warm after this manner, in the cause of your friend, commands esteem, even from those who have personal interest in opposing him. This honourable zeal of friendship has, in every age, attracted the veneration of mankind. It has consecrated to the latest posterity the names of those who have given up their fortunes, and have even exposed their lives, in behalf of the friends whom they loved; while ignominy and disgrace have ever been the portion of them, who deserted their friends in the evil day.

ANXIETY.

DISTRESS not yourselves with anxious fears about to-morrow. Dismiss all solicitude which goes beyond the bounds of prudent precaution. Anxiety, when it seizes the heart, is a dangerous disease, productive both of much sin, and much misery. It acts as a corrosive of the mind. It eats out our present enjoyments, and substitutes, in their place, many an acute pain.

Our Saviour has instructed us to *take no thought for the morrow*: *The morrow*, says he, *shall take thought for the things of itself*. We shall be better able to judge of the course most proper for us to hold, when events have begun to come forward in their order. Their presence often suggests wiser counsels, and more successful expedients, than it is possible for us to contrive at a distance. By excess of solicitude beforehand, we frequently introduce that confusion of mind, and that hurry and disorder of spirits, which bring us into the most unfavourable state for judging soundly. Wherefore affright not yourselves with imaginary terrors. Anticipate not evils, which perhaps may never come. Make the best which you can of this day, in the fear of God, and in the practice of your duty; and, having done so, leave to-morrow to

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itself. *Sufficient for the day, when it comes, will be the evil thereof.*

PROCRASTINATION.

PROCRASTINATION has, throughout every age, been the ruin of mankind. Dwelling amidst endless projects of what they are hereafter to do, they cannot so properly be said to live, as to be always about to live; and the future has ever been the gulph in which the present is swallowed up and lost.—Hence arise many of those misfortunes which befall men in their worldly concerns. What might at present be arranged in their circumstances with advantage, being delayed to another opportunity, cannot be arranged at all: To-morrow being loaded with the concerns of to-day, in addition to its own, is clogged and embarrassed. Affairs, which have been postponed, multiply and crowd upon one another; till, at last, they prove so intricate and perplexed, and the pressure of business becomes so great, that nothing is left, but to sink under the burden.

Evils of the same kind, arising from the same cause, overtake men in their moral and spiritual interests.

interests. There are few, but who are sensible of some things in their character and behaviour, which ought to be corrected, and which, at one time or other, they intend to correct; some headstrong passion, which they design to subdue; some bad habit, which they purpose to reform; some dangerous connexion, which they are resolved to break off. But the convenient season for these reformatations is not yet come. Certain obstacles are in the way, which they expect by and by to surmount; and therefore they go on in peace for the present, in their usual courses, trusting, at a future day, to begin their designed improvement. In the mean time the angel of death descends; and, in the midst of their distant plans, executes his commission, and carries them away.—Guard against delusions of this kind, which have been fatal to so many.—Thou art now in tranquillity, in health, in possession of a calm mind. Improve these advantages, for performing all that becomes thee, as a man, and as a Christian; for who can tell how long thou shalt be permitted to enjoy them?

THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

THE world is a school wherein every vice is taught, and too easily learned. Even from our earliest childhood, false sentiments are instilled into our minds. We are bred up in admiration of the external shew of life. We are accustomed, as soon as we can understand any thing, to hear riches and honours spoken of as the chief goods of men, and proposed to us as the objects to which our future pursuits are to be directed. We see the measures of outward respect and deference taken from these alone. Religion and virtue are recommended to us, in a formal manner, by our teachers and instructors, but all improvements of the mind and heart are visibly placed by the world, in an inferior rank to the advantages of fortune. Vices, that chance to be fashionable, are treated as slight failings; and coloured over in common discourse, with those soft and gentle names which express no condemnation. We enter perhaps, on the world, with good principles, and an aversion to downright vice. But when, as we advance in life, we become initiated in that mystery of iniquity, which is called the way of the world; when we meet with deceit and artifice in all ranks of men; when we behold iniquity authorised by great names,
and

and often rewarded with success and advancement, our original good impressions too soon decay. The practice of the multitude renders vice familiar to our thoughts, and gradually wears off the abhorrence with which we once beheld it. We begin to think, that what is so very general, cannot be highly criminal. The malignity of sin appears diminished, by so many being sharers in the reproach; and instead of men's vices detracting, as they ought to do, from our good opinion of the men, our attachment to the men oftener reconciles us to the vices of which they are guilty.

DANGER OF BAD EXAMPLES.

THE countenance which sin receives from the practice of the multitude, not only removes the restraints which are imposed by modesty and shame; but, such is the degeneracy of the world, that shame is too often employed against the cause of religion and virtue. The ridicule of the giddy and unthinking bears down the conviction of the sober and modest. Against their own belief, they appear to adopt the notions of the infidel; and against their own choice, they join in the vices of the libertine; that they may
not

not be reproached as persons of a narrow mind, and still enslaved to the prejudices of education. Interest, too, often coincides with this weakness of disposition, in tempting such persons to follow the multitude. To fall in with the prevailing taste, to suit themselves to the passions of the great, or to the humours of the low, with whom they chance to be connected, appears the readiest way to rise in the world. Hence they are naturally led to relinquish the firmness of an upright character for that supple and versable turn, which accommodates itself to the times, and assumes whatever appearance seems most convenient for interest.—Such are the dangers to which we are exposed, in time of corruption, of *following the multitude to do evil*; dangers which require our most serious attention and care, in order to guard ourselves against them.

THE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

THERE is nothing of which we are more ready to complain, than of our narrow and confined views of nature, and of Providence, and of all things around us: and yet upon examination, it will be found, that our views extend, on every side, just as far as they ought; and that,
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to see and know more than is allowed us, instead of bringing any advantage, would produce certain misery.—We pry, for instance, with impatient curiosity, into future events. Happily for us, they are veiled and covered up; and one peep behind that veil, were it permitted, would be sufficient to poison the whole comfort of our days, by the anticipation of sorrows to come.—In like manner, we often wish with eagerness to penetrate into the secrets of nature, to look into the invisible world, and to be made acquainted with the whole destiny of man. Our wish is denied; we are environed on all hands with mystery; and that mystery is our happiness. For were those great invisible objects fully disclosed, the sight of them would confound and overwhelm us. It would either totally derange our feeble faculties, or would engross our attention to such a degree, as to lay us aside from the business and concerns of this world. It would have the same effect, as if we were carried away from the earth, and mingled among the inhabitants of some other planet. The knowledge that is allowed to us, was designed to fit us for acting our part in our present state. At the exact point, therefore, where usefulness ends, knowledge stops, and ignorance commences. Light shines upon us, as long as it serves to guide our path; but forsakes us, as soon as it becomes noxious to the eye; and salutary darkness

darkness is appointed to close the scene.—
Thoughtless and stupid must that man be, who,
in all this furniture of the human mind, in this
exact adjustment of its several powers to the
great purposes of life, discerns not the hand
of adorable Wisdom, as well as of infinite Good-
ness.

THE WISDOM OF GOD.

WHEN we view that immense structure of
the universe in which we dwell; when
we think of Him, whose wisdom has planned the
whole system of being; whose mind compre-
hends, whose counsels direct, the whole course of
events, from the beginning to the end of time; by
whom nothing is so inconsiderable as to be over-
looked, or so transient as to be forgotten; who
attends to the concerns of the poor man in his
cottage, while he is steering the sun and the
moon in their course through the heavens; into
what astonishment and self-annihilation do we
fall! Before him all our boasted knowledge is
ignorance, and our wisdom is folly. Wherever
we cast our eyes on his works and ways, we find
all things adjusted in *number, weight, and mea-
sure*; and after all that we can survey, Lo! these
are

are but a part of his ways; and *how small a portion is heard of him!*

It is the power of God, which produces among the multitude of men any impressions of religion. When thunder roars in the heavens, or an earthquake shakes the ground, they are struck with awe, and disposed to worship an invisible power. But such impressions of the Deity are occasional and transitory. The lasting reverence of a Supreme Being arises, in a well-informed mind, from the display of that infinite wisdom which all the universe presents. Its operations are constantly, though silently, going on around us. We may view it in the peaceful and sedate state of the universe, as well as in its greatest commotions; we behold it in every insect that moves on the ground, at the same time that we admire it in the revolutions of the celestial bodies. Happy for us if the contemplation shall nourish that temper of habitual devotion, which so well becomes dependent beings, and is so intimately connected with all virtue!

BEAUTIES OF BLAIR.

THE COMPASSION OF GOD.

COMPASSION to the unfortunate, as it is exerted among men, is indeed accompanied with certain disturbed and painful feelings, arising from sympathy with those whom we pity. But every such feeling we must remove from our thoughts, when we ascribe an affection of this nature to the Deity. It is true, that, in scripture language, the divine compassion is sometimes figured by strong allusions to the relenting struggles and passionate meltings of the human heart. But we easily perceive that such representations are to be understood with the allowances which figurative language requires. All that is amiable in compassion belongs to God; but all that is imperfect in it must be left to man. In the Supreme Being there can be no perturbation or uneasiness; no contrast of feelings, nor fluctuation of purpose. His compassion imports a kind regard to the circumstances of the unhappy. But still it is such a regard as suits the perfection of the great Governor of the universe; whose benignity, undisturbed by any violent emotion, ever maintains the same tranquil tenor, like the unruffled and uninterrupted serenity of the highest heavens.

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It is important to observe, that this pity and compassion of our heavenly Father extends itself to our moral and spiritual concerns, in like manner as to our natural and external distresses. In that great dispensation of the redemption of the world by his son Jesus Christ, he is always represented in scripture as moved by pity for our fallen and wretched estate. The same principle which leads him to regard with compassion the widow and the fatherless, led him to look down with compassion on an helpless and forlorn race, degraded from their original honour. From infinite mercy he sent his Son *to seek and to save that which was lost*. Agreeable to this spirit of compassion, displayed in our redemption, is the whole dispensation of divine grace towards man in his present state of infirmity. It speaks continually the doctrine of consolation and merciful aid; *grace to be sufficient for us, and strength to be made perfect in our weakness*.

COMPASSION.

CAN any virtue admit of a higher recommendation than its being that disposition under the character of which the Almighty chooses to be peculiarly known to us? How can we claim any relation to the Father of mercies, or how look up to him for comfort and grace, if

we shew no bowels of mercy, gentleness, and kindness, to one another?—The whole plan, indeed, on which he hath formed human nature, and all the circumstances in which he hath placed us on earth, are plainly contrived to excite affections of benevolence, and to enforce works of mercy. Not only hath he planted compassion in the human breast, as one of the strongest instincts there, but he hath so connected us in society, as necessarily to require that our benevolent instincts should be brought into exercise. For it is apparent that no man, in any rank of life, even the highest, is sufficient for his own well-being. He can neither supply his own wants, nor provide for his own comforts, without the co-operation of others. The dependence here is mutual between the high and the low, the rich and the poor. Each, in one way or other, calls on each for aid. All are so linked together, as to be impelled by a thousand motives to assist one another in the time of need. This is what nature, what society, what Providence, all speak with a loud voice; a voice which may be said to have gone forth even to the ends of the earth, and to have been heard and understood by the most barbarous tribes of men. For among savage and uncultivated nations, no less than among the most civilized and polished, the energy of compassion is felt, and its claims are recognised and obeyed.

BEAUTIES

BEAUTIES
OF
BLAIR'S LECTURES
ON
RHETORIC, &c.



OF SPEECH.

ONE of the most distinguished privileges which Providence has conferred upon mankind, is the power of communicating their thoughts to one another. Destitute of this power, Reason would be a solitary, and, in some measure, an unavailing principle. Speech is the great instrument by which man becomes beneficial to man: and it is to the intercourse and transmission of thought, by means of speech, that we are chiefly indebted for the improvement of thought itself. Small are the advances which a single unassisted individual can make towards perfecting any of his powers. What we call human reason, is not the effort or ability of one, so much as it is the result of the reason of many, arising from lights mutually communicated, in consequence of discourse and writing.

OF TASTE.

TASTE may be defined, "The power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and art." The first question that occurs concerning it is, whether it is to be considered as an internal sense, or as an exertion of reason? Reason is a very general term; but if we understand by it, that power of the mind which in speculative matters discovers truth, and in practical matters judges of the fitness of means to an end, I apprehend the question may be easily answered. For nothing can be more clear, than that Taste is not resolvable into any such operation of reason. It is not merely through a discovery of the understanding, or a deduction of argument, that the mind receives pleasure from a beautiful prospect or a fine poem. Such objects often strike us intuitively, and make a strong impression, when we are unable to assign the reasons of our being pleased. They sometimes strike in the same manner the philosopher and the peasant; the boy and the man. Hence the faculty by which we relish such beauties, seems more nearly allied to a feeling of sense, than to a process of the understanding: and accordingly, from an external sense it has borrowed its name; that sense by which we receive and distinguish

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distinguish the pleasures of food having, in several languages, given rise to the word Taste in the metaphorical meaning under which we now consider it. However, as, in all subjects which regard the operations of the mind, the inaccurate use of words is to be carefully avoided, it must not be inferred from what I have said, that Reason is entirely excluded from the exertions of Taste. Though Taste, beyond doubt, be ultimately founded on a certain natural and instinctive sensibility to beauty, yet Reason, as I shall shew hereafter, assists Taste in many of its operations, and serves to enlarge its power.

IMPROVEMENT OF OUR FACULTIES.

REFLECT first upon that great law of our nature, that exercise is the chief source of improvement in all our faculties. This holds both in our bodily, and in our mental powers. It holds even in our external senses; although these be less the subject of cultivation than any of our other faculties. We see how acute the senses become in persons whose trade or business leads to nice exertions of them. Touch, for instance, becomes infinitely more exquisite in men whose employment requires them to examine the
polish

polish of bodies, than it is in others. They who deal in microscopical observations, or are accustomed to engrave on precious stones, acquire surprising accuracy of sight in discerning the minutest objects; and practice in attending to different flavours and tastes of liquors, wonderfully improves the power of distinguishing them, and of tracing their composition. Placing internal Taste therefore on the footing of a simple sense, it cannot be doubted that frequent exercise, and curious attention to its proper objects, must greatly heighten its power. Of this we have one clear proof in that part of Taste, which is called an ear for music. Experience every day shews, that nothing is more improveable. Only the simplest and plainest compositions are relished at first; use and practice extend our pleasure; teach us to relish finer melody, and by degrees enable us to enter into the intricate and compounded pleasures of harmony. So an eye for the beauties of painting is never all at once acquired. It is gradually formed by being conversant among pictures, and studying the works of the best masters.

Precisely in the same manner, with respect to the beauty of composition and discourse, attention to the most approved models, study of the best authors, comparisons of lower and higher degrees
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of the same beauties, operate towards the refinement of Taste. When one is only beginning his acquaintance with works of genius, the sentiment which attends them is obscure and confused. He cannot point out the several excellencies or blemishes of a performance which he peruses; he is at a loss on what to rest his judgment; all that can be expected is, that he should tell in general whether he be pleased or not. But allow him more experience in works of this kind, and his Taste becomes by degrees more exact and enlightened. He begins to perceive not only the character of the whole, but the beauties and defects of each part; and is able to describe the peculiar qualities which he praises or blames. The mist is dissipated which seemed formerly to hang over the object; and he can at length pronounce firmly, and without hesitation, concerning it. Thus in Taste, considered as mere sensibility, exercise opens a great source of improvement.

OF CRITICISM.

TRUE Criticism is the application of Taste and of good sense to the fine arts. The object which it proposes is, to distinguish what
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is beautiful and what is faulty in every performance; from particular instances to ascend to general principles; and so to form rules or conclusions concerning the several kinds of beauty in works of Genius.

The rules of Criticism are not formed by any induction, *à priori*, as it is called; that is, they are not formed by a train of abstract reasoning, independent of facts and observations. Criticism is an art founded wholly on experience; on the observation of such beauties as have been found to please mankind most generally. For example; Aristotle's rules concerning the unity of action in dramatic and epic composition, were not rules first discovered by logical reasoning, and then applied to poetry; but they were drawn from the practice of Homer and Sophocles: they were founded upon observing the superior pleasure which we receive from the relation of an action which is one and entire, beyond what we receive from the relation of scattered and unconnected facts. Such observations taking their rise at first from feeling and experience, were found on examination to be so consonant to reason, and to the principles of human nature, as to pass into established rules, and to be conveniently applied for judging of the excellency of any performance.

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This is the most natural account of the origin of Criticism.

TASTE AND GENIUS DISTINGUISHED.

TASTE and Genius are two words frequently joined together; and therefore, by inaccurate thinkers, confounded. They signify however two quite different things. The difference between them can be clearly pointed out; and it is of importance to remember it. Taste consists in the power of judging: Genius, in the power of executing. One may have a considerable degree of Taste in Poetry, Eloquence, or any of the fine arts, who has little or hardly any Genius for composition or execution in any of these arts; but Genius cannot be found without including Taste also. Genius, therefore, deserves to be considered as a higher power of the mind than Taste. Genius always imports something inventive or creative; which does not rest in mere sensibility to beauty where it is perceived, but which can, moreover, produce new beauties, and exhibit them in such a manner as strongly to impress the minds of others. Refined Taste forms a good critic; but Genius is farther necessary to form the poet, or the orator.

OF

OF GENIUS.

GENIUS is used to signify that talent or aptitude which we receive from nature, for excelling in any one thing whatever. Thus we speak of a Genius for mathematics, as well as a Genius for poetry; of a Genius for war, for politics, or for any mechanical employment.

This talent or aptitude for excelling in some one particular, is, I have said, what we receive from nature. By art and study, no doubt, it may be greatly improved; but by them alone it cannot be acquired. As Genius is a higher faculty than Taste, it is ever, according to the usual frugality of nature, more limited in the sphere of its operations. It is not uncommon to meet with persons who have an excellent taste in several of the polite arts, such as music, poetry, painting, and eloquence, all together: but, to find one who is an excellent performer in all these arts, is much more rare; or rather, indeed, such an one is not to be looked for. A sort of Universal Genius, or one who is equally and indifferently turned towards several different professions and arts, is not likely to excel in any. Although there may be some few exceptions, yet in general it holds, that when the bent of the mind is wholly

wholly directed towards some one object, exclusive, in a manner, of others, there is the fairest prospect of eminence in that, whatever it be. The rays must converge to a point, in order to glow intensely. This remark I make, on account of its great importance to young people; in leading them to examine with care, and to pursue with ardour, the current and pointing of nature towards those exertions of Genius in which they are most likely to excel.

OF GRANDEUR.

IT is not easy to describe, in words, the precise impression which great and sublime objects make upon us, when we behold them; but every one has a conception of it. It produces a sort of internal elevation and expansion; it raises the mind much above its ordinary state; and fills it with a degree of wonder and astonishment, which it cannot well express. The emotion is certainly delightful; but it is altogether of the serious kind: a degree of awfulness and solemnity, even approaching to severity, commonly attends it when at its height; very distinguishable from the more gay and brisk emotion raised by beautiful objects.

The simplest form of external Grandeur appears in the vast and boundless prospects presented to us by nature ; such as wide extended plains, to which the eye can see no limits ; the firmament of Heaven ; or the boundless expanse of the Ocean. All vastness produces the impression of Sublimity. It is to be remarked, however, that space, extended in length, makes not so strong an impression as height or depth. Though a boundless plain be a grand object, yet a high mountain, to which we look up, or an awful precipice or tower whence we look down on the objects which lie below, is still more so. The excessive Grandeur of the firmament arises from its height, joined to its boundless extent ; and that of the ocean, not from its extent alone, but from the perpetual motion and irresistible force of that mass of waters. Wherever space is concerned, it is clear, that amplitude or greatness of extent, in one dimension or other, is necessary to Grandeur. Remove all bounds from any object, and you presently render it sublime. Hence infinite space, endless numbers, and eternal duration, fill the mind with great ideas.

OF THE SUBLIME.

THE foundation of the Sublime in composition must always be laid in the nature of the object described. Unless it be such an object as, if presented to our eyes, if exhibited to us in reality, would raise ideas of that elevating, that awful, and magnificent kind, which we call Sublime; the description, however finely drawn, is not entitled to come under this class. This excludes all objects that are merely beautiful, gay, or elegant. In the next place, the object must not only, in itself, be sublime, but it must be set before us in such a light as is most proper to give us a clear and full impression of it; it must be described with strength, with conciseness, and simplicity. This depends, principally, upon the lively impression which the poet, or orator, has of the object which he exhibits; and upon his being deeply affected, and warmed, by the sublime idea which he would convey. If his own feeling be languid, he can never inspire us with any strong emotion. Instances, which are extremely necessary on this subject, will clearly shew the importance of all the requisites which I have just now mentioned.

It is, generally speaking, among the most ancient authors, that we are to look for the most striking instances of the Sublime. I am inclined to think, that the early ages of the world, and the rude unimproved state of society, are peculiarly favourable to the strong emotions of Sublimity. The genius of men is then much turned to admiration and astonishment. Meeting with many objects, to them new and strange, their imagination is kept glowing, and their passions are often raised to the utmost. They think, and express themselves boldly, and without restraint. In the progress of society, the genius and manners of men undergo a change more favourable to accuracy, than to strength or Sublimity.

SUBLIMITY OF SCRIPTURE.

OF all writings, ancient or modern, the Sacred Scriptures afford us the highest instances of the Sublime. The descriptions of the Deity, in them, are wonderfully noble; both from the grandeur of the object, and the manner of representing it. What an assemblage, for instance, of awful and sublime ideas is presented to us, in the 18th Psalm, where an appearance of the Almighty is described?

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The instance, given by Longinus, from Moses, *God said, let there be light; and there was light;* belongs to the true Sublime; and the Sublimity of it arises from the strong conception it gives, of an exertion of power, producing its effect with the utmost speed and facility.

OF HOMER.

HOMER is a poet, who, in all ages, and by all critics, has been greatly admired for Sublimity; and he owes much of his grandeur to that native and unaffected simplicity which characterises his manner. His descriptions of hosts engaging; the animation, the fire, and rapidity, which he throws into his battles, present to every reader of the Iliad frequent instances of Sublime Writing. His introduction of the Gods tends often to heighten, in a high degree, the majesty of his warlike scenes. Hence Longinus bestows such high and just commendations on that passage, in the XVth book of the Iliad, where Neptune, when preparing to issue forth into the engagement, is described as shaking the mountains with his steps, and driving his chariot along the ocean. Minerva, arming herself for fight in the Vth book; and Apollo, in the

XVth, leading on the Trojans, and flashing terror with his Ægis on the face of the Greeks, are similar instances of great Sublimity added to the description of battles, by the appearances of those celestial beings. In the XXth book, where all the Gods take part in the engagement, according as they severally favour either the Grecians or the Trojans, the poet's genius is signally displayed, and the description rises into the most awful magnificence. All nature is represented as in commotion. Jupiter thunders in the heavens; Neptune strikes the earth with his Trident; the ships, the city, and the mountains shake; the earth trembles to its centre; Pluto starts from his throne, in dread lest the secrets of the infernal region should be laid open to the view of mortals.

OF OSSIAN.

THE works of Ossian abound with examples of the Sublime. The subjects of which that author treats, and the manner in which he writes, are particularly favourable to it. He possesses all the plain and venerable manner of the ancient times. He deals in no superfluous or gaudy ornaments; but throws forth his images with

with a rapid conciseness, which enables them to strike the mind with the greatest force. Among poets of more polished times, we are to look for the graces of correct writing, for just proportion of parts, and skilfully conducted narration. In the midst of smiling scenery and pleasurable themes, the gay and the beautiful will appear, undoubtedly, to more advantage. But amidst the rude scenes of nature and of society, such as Ossian describes; amidst rocks, and torrents, and whirlwinds, and battles, dwells the Sublime; and naturally associates itself with that grave and solemn spirit which distinguishes the Author of Fingal. "As autumn's dark storms pour from
" two echoing hills, so toward each other ap-
" proached the heroes. As two dark streams
" from high rocks meet and mix, and roar on
" the plain: loud, rough, and dark, in battle,
" met Lochlin and Inisfail; chief mixed his
" strokes with chief, and man with man. Steel
" clanging sounded on steel. Helmets are cleft
" on high; blood bursts, and smokes around.
" As the troubled noise of the ocean when roll
" the waves on high; as the last peal of the
" thunder of heaven; such is the noise of battle.
" The groan of the people spread over the hills.
" It was like the thunder of night, when the
" cloud bursts on Cona, and a thousand ghosts
" shriek at once on the hollow wind." Never
were

were images of more awful Sublimity employed to heighten the terror of battle.

THE USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

WITHOUT a genius for Figurative Language, none should attempt it. Imagination is a power not to be acquired; it must be derived from nature. Its redundancies we may prune, its deviations we may correct, its sphere we may enlarge; but the faculty itself we cannot create: and all efforts towards a metaphorical ornamented Style, if we are destitute of the proper genius for it, will prove awkward and disgusting. Let us satisfy ourselves, however, by considering, that without this talent, or at least with a very small measure of it, we may both write and speak to advantage. Good sense, clear ideas, perspicuity of language, and proper arrangement of words and thoughts, will always command attention. These are indeed the foundations of all solid merit, both in speaking and writing. Many subjects require nothing more; and those which admit of ornament, admit it only as a secondary requisite. To study and to know our own genius well; to follow nature; to seek to improve, but not to force it; are directions which

which cannot be too often given to those who desire to excel in the liberal arts.

ENGLISH STYLE.

THE restoration of King Charles II. seems to be the æra of the formation of our present Style. Lord Clarendon was one of the first who laid aside those frequent inversions which prevailed among writers of the former age. After him, Sir William Temple polished the language still more. But the author, who, by the number and reputation of his works, formed it more than any one into its present state, is Dryden. Dryden began to write at the Restoration, and continued long an author both in poetry and prose. He had made the language his study; and though he wrote hastily, and often incorrectly, and his Style is not free from faults, yet there is a richness in his diction, a copiousness, ease, and variety in his expression, which has not been surpassed by any who have come after him. Since his time, considerable attention has been paid to Purity and Elegance of Style: But it is Elegance rather than Strength, that forms the distinguishing quality of most of the good English writers. Some of them compose in a more manly and ner-

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vous manner than others; but, whether it be from the genius of our language, or from whatever other cause, it appears to me, that we are far from the strength of several of the Greek and Roman authors.

DIRECTIONS FOR FORMING A GOOD STYLE.

THE first direction which I give for this purpose, is, to study clear ideas on the subject concerning which we are to write or speak. This is a direction which may at first appear to have small relation to Style. Its relation to it, however, is extremely close. The foundation of all good Style, is good sense accompanied with a lively imagination. The Style and thoughts of a writer are so intimately connected, that, as I have several times hinted, it is frequently hard to distinguish them. Wherever the impressions of things upon our minds are faint and indistinct, or perplexed and confused, our Style in treating of such things will infallibly be so too. Whereas, what we conceive clearly and feel strongly, we shall naturally express with clearness and with strength. This, then, we may be assured, is a capital rule as to Style, to think closely of
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the subject, till we have attained a full and distinct view of the matter which we are to clothe in words, till we become warm and interested in it ; then, and not till then, shall we find expression begin to flow. Generally speaking, the best and most proper expressions, are those which a clear view of the subject suggests, without much labour or enquiry after them.

In the second place, in order to form a good Style, the frequent practice of composing is indispensably necessary. Many rules concerning Style I have delivered ; but no rules will answer the end without exercise and habit. At the same time, it is not every sort of composing that will improve Style. This is so far from being the case, that by frequent, careless, and hasty composition, we shall acquire certainly a very bad Style ; we shall have more trouble afterwards in unlearning faults, and correcting negligences, than if we had not been accustomed to composition at all. In the beginning therefore, we ought to write slowly and with much care. Let the facility and speed of writing be the fruit of longer practice.

We must observe, however, that there may be an extreme, in too great and anxious a care about words. We must not retard the course of thought,

thought, nor cool the heat of imagination, by pausing too long on every word we employ. There is, on certain occasions, a glow of composition which should be kept up, if we hope to express ourselves happily, though at the expence of allowing some inadvertencies to pass. A more severe examination of these must be left to be the work of correction. For, if the practice of composition be useful, the laborious work of correcting is no less so; is indeed absolutely necessary to our reaping any benefit from the habit of composition. What we have written, should be laid by for some little time, till the ardour of composition be past, till the fondness for the expressions we have used be worn off, and the expressions themselves be forgotten; and then reviewing our work with a cool and critical eye, as if it were the performance of another, we shall discern many imperfections which at first escaped us.

In the third place, with respect to the assistance that is to be gained from the writings of others, it is obvious, that we ought to render ourselves well acquainted with the Style of the best authors. This is requisite both in order to form a just taste in Style, and to supply us with a full stock of words on every subject. In reading authors with a view to Style, attention should be given to the peculiarities of their different manners. I know

no exercise that will be found more useful for acquiring a proper Style, than to translate some passage from an eminent English author into our own words.

In the fourth place, I must caution, at the same time, against a servile imitation of any author whatever. This is always dangerous. It hampers genius; it is likely to produce a stiff manner; and those who are given to close imitation, generally imitate an author's faults as well as his beauties. No man will ever become a good writer or speaker, who has not some degree of confidence to follow his own genius. We ought to beware, in particular, of adopting any author's noted phrases, or transcribing passages from him. Such a habit will prove fatal to all genuine composition. Infinitely better it is to have something that is our own, though of moderate beauty, than to affect to shine in borrowed ornaments, which will, at last, betray the utter poverty of our genius.

In the fifth place, it is an obvious, but material rule, with respect to Style, that we always study to adapt it to the subject, and also to the capacity of our hearers, if we are to speak in public. Nothing merits the name of eloquent or beautiful,

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which is not suited to the occasion, and to the persons to whom it is addressed.

In the last place, I conclude the subject with this admonition, that, in any case, and on any occasion, attention to Style must not engross us so much, as to detract from a higher degree of attention to the thoughts:—"To your expression be attentive;" says the great Roman Critic, "but about your matter be solicitous." A direction the more necessary, as the present taste of the age in writing seems to lean more to Style than to thought. It is much easier to dress up trivial and common sentiments with some beauty of expression, than to afford a fund of vigorous, ingenious, and useful thoughts. The latter requires true genius; the former may be attained by industry, with the help of very superficial parts. Hence, we find so many writers frivolously rich in Style, but wretchedly poor in sentiment. The public ear is now so much accustomed to a correct and ornamented Style, that no writer can, with safety, neglect the study of it. But he is a contemptible one, who does not look to something beyond it; who does not lay the chief stress upon his matter, and employ such ornaments of Style to recommend it, as are manly not foppish.

RISE OF ORATORY.

IN tracing the rise of Oratory, we need not attempt to go far back into the early ages of the world, or search for it among the monuments of Eastern or Egyptian antiquity. In those ages there was, indeed, an Eloquence of a certain kind; but it approached nearer to Poetry, than to what we properly call Oratory. There is reason to believe, as I formerly shewed, that the Language of the first ages was passionate and metaphorical; owing partly to the scanty stock of words, of which Speech then consisted; and partly to the tincture which Language naturally takes from the savage and uncultivated state of men, agitated by unrestrained passions, and struck by events, which to them are strange and surprising. In this state, rapture and enthusiasm, the parents of Poetry, had an ample field. But while the intercourse of men was as yet unfrequent, and force and strength were the chief means employed in deciding controversies, the arts of Oratory and Persuasion, of Reasoning and Debate, could be but little known. The first empires that arose, the Assyrian and Egyptian, were of the despotic kind. The whole power was in the hands of one, or at most of a few. The multitude were accustomed to a blind reverence;

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verence; they were led, not persuaded; and none of those refinements of society, which make public speaking an object of importance, were as yet introduced.

GRECIAN ELOQUENCE.

IT is not till the rise of the Grecian Republics, that we find any remarkable appearances of Eloquence as the art of persuasion; and these gave it such a field as it never had before, and, perhaps, has never had again since that time.

Greece was divided into a multitude of petty states. These were governed, at first, by kings who were called Tyrants; on whose expulsion from all these states, there sprung up a great number of democratical governments, founded nearly on the same plan, animated by the same high spirit of freedom, mutually jealous, and rivals of one another.

Of these Grecian Republics, the most noted, by far, for Eloquence, and, indeed, for arts of every kind, was that of Athens. The Athenians were an ingenious, quick, sprightly people; practised in business, and sharpened by frequent
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and sudden revolutions, which happened in their government. The genius of their government was altogether democratical; their legislature consisted of the whole body of the people. They had, indeed, a Senate of five hundred; but in the general convention of the citizens, was placed the last resort; and affairs were conducted there, entirely by reasoning, speaking, and a skilful application to the passions and interests of a popular assembly. There, laws were made, peace and war decreed, and thence the magistrates were chosen. For the highest honours of the state were alike open to all; nor was the meanest tradesman excluded from a seat in their supreme courts. In such a state, Eloquence, it is obvious, would be much studied, as the surest means of rising to influence and power; and what sort of Eloquence? Not that which was brilliant merely, and showy, but that which was found, upon trial, to be most effectual for convincing, interesting, and persuading the hearers. For there, public speaking was not a mere competition for empty applause, but a serious contention for that public leading, which was the great object both of the men of ambition, and the men of virtue.

In so enlightened and acute a nation, where the highest attention was paid to every thing elegant in the arts, we may naturally expect to find the

public taste refined and judicious. Accordingly, it was improved to such a degree, that the Attic taste and Attic manner have passed into a proverb. It is true, that ambitious demagogues, and corrupt orators, did sometimes dazzle and mislead the people, by a showy but false Eloquence; for the Athenians, with all their acuteness, were factious and giddy, and great admirers of every novelty. But when some important interest drew their attention, when any great danger roused them, and put their judgment to a serious trial, they commonly distinguished, very justly, between genuine and spurious Eloquence: and hence Demosthenes triumphed over all his opponents; because he spoke always to the purpose, affected no insignificant parade of words, used weighty arguments, and shewed them clearly where their interest lay. In critical conjunctures of the state, when the public was alarmed with some pressing danger, when the people were assembled, and proclamation was made by the crier, for any one to rise and deliver his opinion upon the present situation of affairs, empty declamation and sophistical reasoning would not only have been hissed, but resented and punished by an assembly so intelligent and accustomed to business. Their greatest orators trembled on such occasions, when they rose to address the people, as they knew they were to be

be held answerable for the issue of the counsel which they gave. The most liberal endowments of the greatest princes never could found such a school for true oratory, as was formed by the nature of the Athenian Republic. Eloquence there sprung, native and vigorous, from amidst the contentions of faction and freedom, of public business and of active life; and not from that retirement and speculation, which we are apt sometimes to fancy more favourable to Eloquence than they are found to be.

ROMAN ELOQUENCE.

WHEN we compare together the various rival productions of Greece and Rome, we shall always find this distinction obtain, that in the Greek productions there is more native genius; in the Roman, more regularity and art. What the Greeks invented, the Romans polished; the one was the original, rough sometimes, and incorrect; the other, a finished copy.

As the Roman government, during the republic, was of the popular kind, there is no doubt but that, in the hands of the leading men, public speaking became early an engine of government,
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and was employed for gaining distinction and power. But in the rude unpolished times of the State, their speaking was hardly of that sort that could be called Eloquence. Though Cicero endeavours to give some reputation to the elder Cato, and those who were his cotemporaries, yet he acknowledges it to have been "a rude and harsh strain of speech." It was not till a short time preceding Cicero's age, that the Roman Orators rose into any note. Crassus and Antonius, two of the Speakers in the dialogue de Oratore, appear to have been the most eminent, whose different manners Cicero describes with great beauty in that dialogue, and in his other rhetorical works. But as none of their productions are extant, nor any of Hortensius's, who was Cicero's cotemporary and rival at the bar, it is needless to transcribe from Cicero's writings the account which he gives of those great men, and of the character of their Eloquence.

The object in this period most worthy to draw our attention, is Cicero himself; whose name alone suggests every thing that is splendid in Oratory. His method is clear, and his arguments are arranged with great propriety. He never attempts to move, till he has endeavoured to convince; and in moving, especially the

the softer passions, he is very successful. No man knew the power and force of words better than Cicero. He rolls them along with the greatest beauty and pomp ; and, in the structure of his sentences, is curious and exact to the highest degree. He is always full and flowing, never abrupt. He is a great amplifier of every subject ; magnificent, and in his sentiments highly moral. His manner is on the whole diffuse, yet it is often happily varied, and suited to the subject.—When a great public object roused his mind, and demanded indignation and force, he departs considerably from that loose and declamatory manner to which he leans at other times, and becomes exceedingly cogent and vehement.

CICERO AND DEMOSTHENES COMPARED.

THE different manners of these two Princes of Eloquence, and the distinguishing characters of each are so strongly marked in their writings, that the comparison is, in many respects, obvious and easy. The character of Demosthenes is vigour and austerity ; that of Cicero is gentleness and insinuation. In the one, you find more manliness, in the other, more ornament. The one is more harsh, but more spirited and cogent ;

cogent; the other, more agreeable, but withal, looser and weaker.

It is a disadvantage to Demosthenes, that, besides his conciseness, which sometimes produces obscurity, the language, in which he writes, is less familiar to most of us than the Latin, and that we are less acquainted with the Greek antiquities than we are with the Roman. We read Cicero with more ease, and of course with more pleasure. Independent of this circumstance too, he is no doubt, in himself, a more agreeable writer than the other. But notwithstanding this advantage, I am of opinion, that were the state in danger, or some great national interest at stake, which drew the serious attention of the public, an Oration in the spirit and strain of Demosthenes, would have more weight, and produce greater effects than one in the Ciceronian manner. Were Demosthenes's Philippics spoken in a British Assembly, in a similar conjuncture of affairs, they would convince and persuade at this day. The rapid Style, the vehement reasoning, the disdain, anger, boldness, freedom, which perpetually animate them, would render their success infallible over any modern assembly. I question whether the same can be said of Cicero's Orations; whose Eloquence, however beautiful, and however well suited to the Roman taste, yet
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borders oftener on declamation, and is more remote from the manner in which we now expect to hear real business and causes of importance treated.

ELOQUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS.

IN the decline of the Roman Empire, the introduction of Christianity gave rise to a new species of Eloquence, in the apologies, sermons, and pastoral writings of the Fathers of the Church. Among the Latin Fathers, Lactantius and Minutius Felix are the most remarkable for purity of Style; and, in a later age, the famous St. Augustine possesses a considerable share of sprightliness and strength. But none of the Fathers afford any just models of Eloquence. Their Language, as soon as we descend to the third or fourth century, becomes harsh; and they are, in general, infected with the taste of that age, a love of swoln and strained thoughts, and of the play of words. Among the Greek Fathers, the most distinguished, by far, for his oratorial merit, is St. Chrysostome. His Language is pure; his Style highly figured. He is copious, smooth, and sometimes pathetic. But he retains, at the

same time, much of that character which has been always attributed to Asiatic Eloquence, diffuse and redundant to a great degree, and often overwrought and tumid. He may be read, however, with advantage, for the Eloquence of the pulpit, as being freer from false ornaments than the Latin Fathers.

ENGLISH AND FRENCH ELOQUENCE.

IT seems particularly surprising, that Great-Britain should not have made a more conspicuous figure in Eloquence than it has hitherto attained; when we consider the enlightened, and, at the same time, the free and bold genius of the country, which seems not a little to favour Oratory; and when we consider that, of all the polite nations, it alone possesses a popular government, or admits into the legislature such numerous assemblies as can be supposed to lie under the dominion of Eloquence. Notwithstanding this advantage, it must be confessed, that, in most parts of Eloquence, we are undoubtedly inferior, not only to the Greeks and Romans, by many degrees, but also in some respects to the French. We have Philosophers, eminent and conspicuous, perhaps, beyond any nation, in every branch of science.

science. We have both taste and erudition, in a high degree. We have Historians, we have Poets of the greatest name; but of Orators, or Public Speakers, how little have we to boast? And where are the monuments of their genius to be found? In every period we have had some who made a figure, by managing the debates in Parliament; but that figure was commonly owing to their wisdom, or their experience in business, more than to their talents for Oratory; and unless, in some few instances, wherein the power of Oratory has appeared, indeed, with much lustre, the art of Parliamentary Speaking rather obtained to several a temporary applause, than conferred upon any a lasting renown. At the bar, though, questionless, we have many able pleaders, yet few or none of their pleadings have been thought worthy to be transmitted to posterity. In the same manner the British divines have distinguished themselves by the most accurate and rational compositions which, perhaps, any nation can boast of. Many printed sermons we have, full of good sense, and of sound divinity and morality; but the Eloquence to be found in them, the power of persuasion, of interesting and engaging the heart, which is, or ought to be, the great object of the pulpit, is far from bearing a suitable proportion to the excellence of the matter. An English sermon, instead of be-

ing a persuasive animated Oration, seldom rises beyond the strain of correct and dry reasoning. Whereas, in the sermons of Bossuet, Massillon, Bourdaloue, and Flechier, among the French, we see a much higher species of Eloquence aimed at, and in a great measure attained, than the British preachers have in view.

In general, the characteristical difference between the state of Eloquence in France and in Great-Britain is, that the French have adopted higher ideas both of pleasing and persuading by means of Oratory, though sometimes, in the execution they fail. In Great-Britain, we have taken up Eloquence on a lower key; but in our execution, as was naturally to be expected, have been more correct. In France, the style of their Orators is ornamented with bolder figures; and their discourse carried on with more amplification, more warmth and elevation. The composition is often very beautiful; but sometimes, also, too diffuse, and deficient in that strength and cogency which renders Eloquence powerful.

Several reasons may be given, why Modern Eloquence has been so limited and humble in its efforts. I am of opinion, that this change must, in part, be ascribed to that correct turn of thinking, which has been so much studied in modern times.

times. It can hardly be doubted, that, in many efforts of mere genius, the antient Greeks and Romans excelled us; but, on the other hand, that, in accuracy and closeness of reasoning on many subjects, we have some advantage over them, ought, I think, to be admitted also. In proportion as the world has advanced, philosophy has made greater progress. A certain strictness of good sense has, in this island particularly, been cultivated, and introduced into every subject. Hence we are more on our guard against the flowers of Elocution; we are on the watch; we are jealous of being deceived by Oratory. Our Public Speakers are obliged to be more reserved than the Antients, in their attempts to elevate the imagination, and warm the passions; and, by the influence of prevailing taste, their own genius is sobered and chastened, perhaps, in too great a degree. It is likely too, I confess, that what we fondly ascribe to our correctness and good sense, is owing, in a great measure, to our phlegm and natural coldness. For the vivacity and sensibility of the Greeks and Romans, more especially of the former, seem to have been much greater than ours, and to have given them a higher relish of all the beauties of Oratory.

MEANS OF IMPROVING IN ELOQUENCE.

WHETHER Nature or Art contribute most to form an Orator, is a trifling inquiry. In all attainments whatever, Nature must be the prime agent. She must bestow the original talents. She must sow the seeds; but culture is requisite for bringing these seeds to perfection. Nature must always have done somewhat; but a great deal will always be left to be done by Art.

What stands highest in the order of means, is personal character and disposition. In order to be a truly eloquent or persuasive Speaker, nothing is more necessary than to be a virtuous man.

For, consider first, whether any thing contribute more to persuasion, than the opinion which we entertain of the probity, disinterestedness, candour, and other good moral qualities of the person who endeavours to persuade? These give weight and force to every thing which he utters; nay, they add a beauty to it; they dispose us to listen with attention and pleasure; and create a secret partiality in favour of that side which he espouses. Whereas, if we entertain a suspicion of
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craft and disingenuity, of a corrupt, or a base mind, in the Speaker, his Eloquence loses all its real effect. It may entertain and amuse; but it is viewed as artifice, as trick, as the play only of Speech; and, viewed in this light, whom can it persuade? We even read a book with more pleasure, when we think favourably of its Author; but when we have the living Speaker before our eyes, addressing us personally on some subject of importance, the opinion we entertain of his character must have a much more powerful effect.

Next to moral qualifications, what, in the second place, is most necessary to an Orator, is a fund of knowledge. We must never forget that good sense and knowledge are the foundation of all good speaking. There is no art that can teach one to be eloquent, in any sphere, without a sufficient acquaintance with what belongs to that sphere; or if there were an art that made such pretensions, it would be mere quackery, like the pretensions of the Sophists of old, to teach their disciples to speak for and against every subject; and would be deservedly exploded by all wise men. Attention to Style, to Composition, and all the Arts of Speech, can only assist an Orator in setting off, to advantage, the stock of materials which he possesses; but the stock, the

materials themselves, must be brought from other quarters than from Rhetoric. He who is to plead at the Bar, must make himself thoroughly master of the knowledge of the Law; of all the learning and experience that can be useful in his profession, for supporting a cause, or convincing a Judge. He who is to speak from the Pulpit, must apply himself closely to the study of divinity, of practical religion, of morals, of human nature; that he may be rich in all the topics, both of instruction and of persuasion. He who would fit himself for being a Member of the Supreme Council of the Nation, or of any Public Assembly, must be thoroughly acquainted with the business that belongs to such Assembly; he must study the forms of Court, the course of procedure; and must attend minutely to all the facts that may be the subject of question or deliberation.

Besides the knowledge that properly belongs to his profession, a Public Speaker, if ever he expects to be eminent, must make himself acquainted, as far as his necessary occupations allow, with the general circle of polite literature. The study of Poetry may be useful to him, on many occasions, for embellishing his Style, for suggesting lively images, or agreeable allusions. The study of History may be still more useful to him;

him; as the knowledge of facts, of eminent characters, and of the course of human affairs, finds place on many occasions. There are few great occasions of Public Speaking, in which one may not derive assistance from cultivated taste, and extensive knowledge. They will often yield him materials for proper ornament; sometimes, for argument and real use. A deficiency of knowledge, even in subjects that belong not directly to his own profession, will expose him to many disadvantages, and give better qualified rivals a great superiority over him.

Allow me to recommend, in the third place, a habit of application and industry. Without this, it is impossible to excel in any thing. We must not imagine, that it is by a sort of mushroom growth, that one can rise to be a distinguished Pleader, or Preacher, or Speaker in any assembly. It is not by starts of application, or by a few years preparation of study afterwards discontinued, that eminence can be attained. No; it can be attained only by means of regular industry, grown up into a habit, and ready to be exerted on every occasion that calls for industry. This is the fixed law of our nature; and he must have a very high opinion of his own genius indeed, that can believe himself an exception to it.

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In the fourth place, Attention to the best models will contribute greatly towards improvement. Every one who speaks or writes should, indeed, endeavour to have somewhat that is his own, that is peculiar to himself, and that characterises his Composition and Style. Slavish Imitation depresses Genius, or rather betrays the want of it. But withal, there is no Genius so original, but may be profited and assisted by the aid of proper examples, in Style, Composition, and Delivery. They always open some new ideas; they serve to enlarge and correct our own. They quicken the current of thought, and excite emulation.

In the fifth place, Besides attention to the best models, frequent exercise both in composing and speaking, will be admitted to be a necessary mean of improvement. That sort of Composition is, doubtless, most useful, which relates to the profession, or kind of Public Speaking, to which persons addict themselves. This they should keep ever in their eye, and be gradually inuring themselves to it. But let me also advise them, not to allow themselves in negligent Composition of any kind. He who has it for his aim to write, or to speak correctly, should, in the most trivial kind of Composition, in writing a letter, nay, even in common discourse, study to acquit himself with propriety. There is, in every thing,
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a manner which is becoming, and has propriety; and opposite to it there is a clumsy and faulty performance of the same thing. The becoming manner is very often the most light, and seemingly careless manner; but it requires taste and attention to seize the just idea of it. That idea, when acquired, we should keep in our eye, and form upon it whatever we write or say.

It now only remains to inquire, of what use may the study of Critical and Rhetorical Writers be for improving one in the practice of Eloquence? These are certainly not to be neglected; and yet, I dare not say that much is to be expected from them. For professed Writers on Public Speaking, we must look chiefly among the Antients. In modern times, Popular Eloquence, as an Art, has never been very much the object of study; it has not the same powerful effects among us that it had in more democratical states; and therefore has not been cultivated with the same care. Among the Moderns, though there has been a great deal of good criticism on the different kinds of Writing, yet much has not been attempted on the subject of Eloquence or Public Discourse; and what has been given us of that kind, has been drawn mostly from the Antients.

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It is to the original Antient Writers that we must chiefly have recourse; and it is a reproach to any one, whose profession calls him to speak in public, to be unacquainted with them. In all the Antient Rhetorical Writers, there is, indeed, this defect, that they are too systematical; they aim at doing too much; at reducing Rhetoric to a complete and perfect Art, which may even supply invention with materials on every subject; insomuch, that one would imagine they expected to form an Orator by rule, in as mechanical a manner as one would form a Carpenter. Whereas, all that can, in truth, be done, is to give openings for assisting and enlightening Taste, and for pointing out to Genius the course it ought to hold.

THE ANTIENTS AND MODERNS COMPARED.

IF any one, at this day, takes upon him to decry the antient Classics; if he pretends to have discovered that Homer and Virgil are Poets of inconsiderable merit, and that Demosthenes and Cicero are not great Orators, we may boldly venture to tell such a man, that he is come too late with his discovery. The reputation of such
Writers

Writers is established upon a foundation too solid, to be now shaken by any arguments whatever; for it is established upon the almost universal taste of mankind, proved and tried throughout the succession of so many ages. Imperfections in their works he may indeed point out; passages that are faulty he may shew; for where is the human work that is perfect? But, if he attempts to discredit their works in general, or to prove that the reputation which they have gained is, on the whole, unjust, there is an argument against him, which is equal to full demonstration. He must be in the wrong; for human nature is against him. In matters of taste, such as Poetry and Oratory, to whom does the appeal lie? where is the standard? and where the authority of the last decision? where is it to be looked for, but in those feelings and sentiments that are found, on the most extensive examination, to be the common sentiments and feelings of men? These have been fully consulted on this head. The Public, the unprejudiced Public, has been tried and appealed to for many centuries, and throughout almost all civilized nations. It has pronounced its verdict; it has given its sanction to these Writers; and from this tribunal there lies no farther appeal.

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Let us guard, however, against a blind and implicit veneration for the Antients, in every thing. I have opened the general principle, which must go far in instituting a fair comparison between them and the Moderns. Whatever superiority the Antients may have had in point of genius, yet in all arts, where the natural progress of knowledge has had room to produce any considerable effects, the Moderns cannot but have some advantage. The world may, in certain respects, be considered as a person, who must needs gain somewhat by advancing in years. Its improvements have not, I confess, been always in proportion to the centuries that have passed over it; for, during the course of some ages, it has sunk as into a total lethargy. Yet, when roused from that lethargy, it has generally been able to avail itself, more or less, of former discoveries. At intervals, there arose some happy genius, who could both improve on what had gone before, and invent something new. With the advantage of a proper stock of materials, an inferior genius can make greater progress, than a much superior one, to whom these materials are wanting.

Hence, in Natural Philosophy, Astronomy, Chemistry, and other Sciences that depend on an extensive knowledge and observation of facts,
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Modern Philosophers have an unquestionable superiority over the Antient. I am inclined also to think, that in matters of pure reasoning, there is more precision among the Moderns, than in some instances there was among the Antients; owing perhaps to a more extensive literary intercourse, which has improved and sharpened the faculties of men. In some studies too, that relate to taste and fine writing, which is our object, the progress of Society must, in equity, be admitted to have given us some advantages. For instance, in History, there is certainly more political knowledge in several European nations at present, than there was in antient Greece and Rome. We are better acquainted with the nature of government, because we have seen it under a greater variety of forms and revolutions. The world is more laid open than it was in former times; commerce is greatly enlarged; more countries are civilized; posts are every where established; intercourse is become more easy; and the knowledge of facts, by consequence, more attainable. All these are great advantages to Historians; of which, in some measure, as I shall afterwards shew, they have availed themselves. In the more complex kinds of Poetry, likewise, we may have gained somewhat, perhaps, in point of regularity and accuracy. In Dramatic Performances, having the advantage

of the antient models, we may be allowed to have made some improvements in the variety of the characters, the conduct of the plot, attentions to probability, and to decorums.

These seem to me the chief points of superiority we can plead above the Antients. Neither do they extend as far as might be imagined at first view. For if the strength of genius be on one side, it will go far, in works of taste at least, to counter-balance all the artificial improvements which can be made by greater knowledge and correctness. To return to our comparison of the age of the world with that of a man; it may be said, not altogether without reason, that if the advancing age of the world bring along with it more science and more refinement, there belong, however, to its earlier periods, more vigour, more fire, more enthusiasm of genius. This appears indeed to form the characteristical difference between the Antient Poets, Orators, and Historians, compared with the Modern. Among the Antients, we find higher conceptions, greater simplicity, more original fancy. Among the Moderns, sometimes more art and correctness, but feebler exertions of genius. But though this be in general a mark of distinction between the Antients and Moderns, yet, like all general observations, it must be understood with some exceptions;

ceptions; for, in point of poetical fire and original genius, Milton and Shakespeare are inferior to no Poets in any age.

OF DIALOGUES.

DIIALOGUE Writing may be executed in two ways, either as direct conversation, where none but the Speakers appear, which is the method that Plato uses; or as the recital of a conversation, where the Author himself appears, and gives an account of what passed in discourse; which is the method that Cicero generally follows. But though those different methods make some variation in the form, yet the nature of the Composition is at bottom the same in both, and subject to the same laws.

A Dialogue, in one or other of these forms, on some philosophical, moral, or critical subject, when it is well conducted, stands in a high rank among the Works of Taste; but is much more difficult in the execution than is commonly imagined. For it requires more, than merely the introduction of persons speaking in succession. It ought to be a natural and spirited representation of real conversation; exhibiting the cha-

rafter and manners of the feveral Speakers, and fuiting to the character of each that peculiarity of thought and expreffion which diftinguiſhes him from another. A Dialogue, thus conducted, gives the Reader a very agreeable entertainment; as by means of the debate going on among the perſonages, he receives a fair and full view of both ſides of the argument; and is, at the ſame time, amuſed with polite converſation, and with a diſplay of conſiſtent and well-supported characters. An author, therefore, who has genius for executing ſuch a Compoſition after this manner, has it in his power both to inſtruct and to pleaſe.

Among the Antients, Plato is eminent for the beauty of his Dialogues. The ſcenery, and the circumſtances of many of them, are beautifully painted. The characters of the Sophiſts, with whom Socrates diſputed, are well drawn; a variety of perſonages are exhibited to us; we are introduced into a real converſation, often ſupported with much life and ſpirit, after the Socratic manner. For richneſs and beauty of imagination, no Philoſophic Writer, Antient or Modern, is comparable to Plato. The only fault of his imagination is, ſuch an exceſs of fertility as allows it ſometimes to obſcure his judgment. It frequently carries him into Allegory, Fiction, Enthu-

Enthusiasm, and the airy regions of Mystical Theology. The Philosopher is, at times, lost in the Poet. But whether we be edified with the matter or not, (and much edification he often affords,) we are always entertained with the manner; and left with a strong impression of the sublimity of the Author's genius.

Cicero's Dialogues, or those recitals of conversation which he has introduced into several of his Philosophical and Critical Works, are not so spirited, nor so characteristical, as those of Plato. Yet some, as that "De Oratore" especially, are agreeable and well supported. They shew us conversation carried on among some of the principal persons of antient Rome, with freedom, good breeding, and dignity.

Lucian is a Dialogue Writer of much eminence; though his subjects are seldom such as can entitle him to be ranked among Philosophical Authors. He has given the model of the light and humourous Dialogue, and has carried it to great perfection. A character of levity, and at the same time of wit and penetration, distinguishes all his writings.

EPISTOLARY WRITING.

EPISTOLARY Writing appears, at first view, to stretch into a very wide field. For there is no subject whatever, on which one may not convey his thoughts to the Public in the form of a Letter. Lord Shaftsbury, for instance, Mr. Harris, and several other Writers, have chosen to give this form to philosophical treatises. But Epistolary Writing becomes a distinct species of Composition, subject to the cognizance of Criticism, only or chiefly, when it is of the easy and familiar kind; when it is conversation carried on upon paper, between two friends at a distance. Such an intercourse, when well conducted, may be rendered very agreeable to Readers of taste. If the subject of the Letters be important, they will be the more valuable. Even though there should be nothing very considerable in the subject, yet if the spirit and turn of the correspondence be agreeable; if they be written in a sprightly manner, and with native grace and ease, they may still be entertaining; more especially if there be any thing to interest us, in the characters of those who write them. Hence the curiosity which the Public has always discovered, concerning the Letters of eminent persons. We expect in them to discover
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somewhat of their real character. It is childish indeed to expect, that in Letters we are to find the whole heart of the Author unveiled. Concealment and disguise take place, more or less, in all human intercourse. But still, as Letters from one friend to another make the nearest approach to conversation, we may expect to see more of a character displayed in these than in other productions, which are studied for public view. We please ourselves with beholding the Writer in a situation which allows him to be at his ease, and to give vent occasionally to the overflowings of his heart.

Much, therefore, of the merit, and the agreeableness of Epistolary Writing, will depend on its introducing us into some acquaintance with the Writer. There, if any where, we look for the Man, not for the Author. Its first and fundamental requisite is, to be natural and simple; for a stiff and laboured manner is as bad in a Letter, as it is in Conversation. This does not banish sprightliness and wit. These are graceful in Letters, just as they are in conversation; when they flow easily, and without being studied; when employed so as to season, not to cloy. One who, either in Conversation or in Letters, affects to shine and to sparkle always, will not please long. The style of Letters
should

should not be too highly polished. It ought to be neat and correct, but no more. All nicety about words, betrays study; and hence musical periods, and appearances of number and harmony in arrangement, should be carefully avoided in Letters. The best Letters are commonly such as the Authors have written with most facility. What the heart or the imagination dictates, always flows readily; but where there is no subject to warm or interest these, constraint appears; and hence, those Letters of mere compliment, congratulation, or affected condolance, which have cost the Authors most labour in composing, and which, for that reason, they perhaps consider as their master-pieces, never fail of being the most disagreeable and insipid to the Readers.

Pliny's Letters are one of the most celebrated collections which the Antients have given us, in the epistolary way. They are elegant and polite; and exhibit a very pleasing and amiable view of the Author. But, according to the vulgar phrase, they smell too much of the lamp. They are too elegant and fine; and it is not easy to avoid thinking, that the Author is casting an eye towards the Public, when he is appearing to write only for his friends.

Cicero's

Cicero's Epistles, though not so shewy as those of Pliny, are, on several accounts, a far more valuable collection; indeed, the most valuable collection of Letters extant in any language. They are letters of real business, written to the greatest men of the age, composed with purity and elegance, but without the least affectation; and, what adds greatly to their merit, written without any intention of being published to the world. For it appears, that Cicero never kept copies of his own Letters; and we are wholly indebted to the care of his freed-man Tyro, for the large collection that was made, after his death, of those which are now extant, amounting to near a thousand. They contain the most authentic materials of the history of that age; and are the last monuments which remain of Rome in its free state; the greatest part of them being written during that important crisis, when the Republic was on the point of ruin; the most interesting situation, perhaps, which is to be found in the affairs of mankind. To his intimate friends, especially to Atticus, Cicero lays open himself and his heart, with entire freedom. In the course of his correspondence with others, we are introduced into acquaintance with several of the principal personages of Rome; and it is remarkable that most of Cicero's correspondents, as well as himself, are elegant and polite

polite Writers; which serves to heighten our idea of the taste and manners of that age.

OF FICTITIOUS HISTORY.

FICTITIOUS histories might be employed for very useful purposes. They furnish one of the best channels for conveying instruction, for painting human life and manners, for shewing the errors into which we are betrayed by our passions, for rendering virtue amiable and vice odious. The effect of well-contrived stories, towards accomplishing these purposes, is stronger than any effect that can be produced by simple and naked instruction; and hence we find, that the wisest men in all ages have more or less employed fables and fictions, as the vehicles of knowledge. These have ever been the basis of both Epic and Dramatic Poetry. It is not, therefore, the nature of this sort of Writing, considered in itself, but the faulty manner of its execution, that can expose it to any contempt.

In all countries we find its origin very antient. The genius of the Eastern nations, in particular, was from the earliest times much turned towards invention, and the love of fiction. Their Divinity,

nity, their Philosophy, and their Politics, were clothed in fables and parables. The Indians, the Persians, and Arabians, were all famous for their tales.

During the dark ages, this sort of writing assumed a new and very singular form, and for a long while made a great figure in the world.—The martial spirit of those nations, among whom the feudal government prevailed; the establishment of single combat, as an allowed method of deciding causes both of justice and honour; the appointment of champions in the cause of women, who could not maintain their own rights by the sword; together with the institution of military tournaments, in which different kingdoms vied with one another, gave rise, in those times, to that marvellous system of chivalry, which is one of the most singular appearances in the history of mankind. Upon this were founded those romances of knight-errantry, which carried an ideal chivalry to a still more extravagant height than it had risen in fact. There was displayed in them a new and very wonderful sort of world, hardly bearing any resemblance to the world in which we dwell. Not only knights setting forth to redress all manner of wrongs, but in every page, magicians, dragons, and giants, invulnerable men, winged horses,

horses, enchanted armour, and enchanted castles; adventures absolutely incredible, yet suited to the gross ignorance of these ages, and to the legends, and superstitious notions concerning magic and necromancy, which then prevailed. This merit they had, of being writings of the highly moral and heroic kind. Their knights were patterns, not of courage merely, but of religion, generosity, courtesy, and fidelity; and the heroines were no less distinguished for modesty, delicacy, and the utmost dignity of manners.

These were the first Compositions that received the name of Romances.—In Spain, where the taste for this sort of writing had been most greedily caught, the ingenious Cervantes, in the beginning of the last century, contributed greatly to explode it; and the abolition of tournaments, the prohibition of single combat, the disbelief of magic and enchantments, and the change in general of manners throughout Europe, began to give a new turn to fictitious Composition. The heroism and the gallantry, the moral and virtuous turn of the chivalry romance, were still preserved; but the dragons, the necromancers, and the enchanted castles, were banished, and some small resemblance to human nature was introduced. Still, however, there was too much of the

the marvellous in them to please an age which now aspired to refinement. The characters were discerned to be strained; the style to be swollen; the adventures incredible: the books themselves were voluminous and tedious.

Hence, this sort of Composition soon assumed a third form, and from magnificent Heroic Romance, dwindled down to the Familiar Novel. These novels, both in France and England, during the age of Louis XIV. and King Charles II. were in general of a trifling nature, without the appearance of moral tendency, or useful instruction. Since that time, however, somewhat better has been attempted, and a degree of reformation introduced into the spirit of Novel Writing. Imitations of life and character have been made their principal object. Relations have been professed to be given of the behaviour of persons in particular interesting situations, such as may actually occur in life; by means of which, what is laudable or defective in character and conduct may be pointed out, and placed in an useful light.

No fiction, in any language, was ever better supported than the Adventures of Robinson Crusoe. While it is carried on with that appearance of truth and simplicity, which takes a strong

hold of the imagination of all Readers, it suggests, at the same time, very useful instruction; by shewing how much the native powers of man may be exerted for surmounting the difficulties of any external situation. Mr. Fielding's Novels are highly distinguished for their humour; a humour which, if not of the most refined and delicate kind, is original, and peculiar to himself. The characters which he draws are lively and natural, and marked with the strokes of a bold pencil. The general scope of his stories is favourable to humanity and goodness of heart; and in Tom Jones, his greatest work, the artful conduct of the fable, and the subserviency of all the incidents to the winding up of the whole, deserve much praise. The most moral of all our Novel Writers is Richardson, the Author of *Clarissa*, a Writer of excellent intentions, and of very considerable capacity and genius; did he not possess the unfortunate talent of spinning out pieces of amusement into an immeasurable length. The trivial performances which daily appear in public under the title of Lives, Adventures, and Histories, by anonymous Authors, if they be often innocent, yet are most commonly insipid; and, though in the general it ought to be admitted that Characteristical Novels, formed upon Nature and upon Life, without extravagance, and without licentiousness, might furnish an agreeable

able and useful entertainment to the mind; yet considering the manner in which these writings have been, for the most part, conducted, it must also be confessed, that they oftener tend to dissipation and idleness, than to any good purpose.

OF POETRY.

THE most just and comprehensive definition which, I think, can be given of Poetry, is, "That it is the language of passion, or of enlivened imagination, formed, most commonly, into regular numbers." The Historian, the Orator, the Philosopher, address themselves, for the most part, primarily to the understanding: their direct aim is to inform, to persuade, or to instruct. But the primary aim of a Poet is to please, and to move; and, therefore, it is to the Imagination, and the Passions, that he speaks. He may, and he ought to have it in his view, to instruct, and to reform; but it is indirectly, and by pleasing and moving, that he accomplishes this end. His mind is supposed to be animated by some interesting object which fires his Imagination, or engages his Passions; and which, of course, communicates to his Style a peculiar

elevation suited to his ideas; very different from that mode of expression, which is natural to the mind in its calm, ordinary state. I have added to my definition, that this language of Passion, or Imagination, is formed, *most commonly*, into regular numbers; because, though Versification be, in general, the exterior distinction of Poetry, yet there are some forms of Verse so loose and familiar, as to be hardly distinguishable from Prose; such as the Verse of Terence's Comedies; and there is also a species of Prose, so measured in its cadence, and so much raised in its tone, as to approach very near to Poetical Numbers; such as the Telemachus of Fenelon; and the English Translation of Ossian. The truth is, Verse and Prose, on some occasions, run into one another, like light and shade. It is hardly possible to determine the exact limit where Eloquence ends, and Poetry begins; nor is there any occasion for being very precise about the boundaries, as long as the nature of each is understood.

THE ORIGIN OF POETRY.

IT has been often said, and the concurring voice of all antiquity affirms, that Poetry is older than Prose. But in what sense this seemingly

ingly strange paradox holds true, has not always been well understood. There never, certainly, was any period of society in which men conversed together in Poetical Numbers. It was in very humble and scanty Prose, as we may easily believe, that the first tribes carried on intercourse among themselves, relating to the wants and necessities of life. But from the very beginning of Society, there were occasions on which they met together for feasts, sacrifices, and public assemblies; and on all such occasions, it is well known that music, song, and dance, made their principal entertainment. It is chiefly in America, that we have had the opportunity of being made acquainted with men in their savage state. We learn from the particular and concurring accounts of Travellers, that, among all the nations of that vast continent, especially among the Northern Tribes, with whom we have had most intercourse, music and song are, at all their meetings, carried on with an incredible degree of enthusiasm; that the Chiefs of the Tribe are those who signalize themselves most on such occasions; that it is in songs they celebrate their religious rites; that, by these, they lament their public and private calamities, the death of friends, or the loss of warriors; express their joy on their victories; celebrate the great actions of their nation, and their heroes; excite each other to per-

form brave exploits in war, or to suffer death and torments with unshaken constancy.

Here then we see the first beginnings of Poetic Composition, in those rude effusions, which the enthusiasm of fancy or passion suggested to untaught men, when roused by interesting events, and by their meeting together in public assemblies. Two particulars would early distinguish this language of song, from that in which they conversed on the common occurrences of life; namely, an unusual arrangement of words, and the employment of bold figures of speech. It would invert words, or change them from that order in which they are commonly placed, to that which most suited the train in which they rose in the Speaker's imagination; or which was most accommodated to the cadence of the passion by which he was moved. Under the influence too of any strong emotion, objects do not appear to us such as they really are, but such as passion makes us see them. We magnify and exaggerate; we seek to interest all others in what causes our emotion; we compare the least things to the greatest; we call upon the absent as well as the present, and even address ourselves to things inanimate. Hence, in congruity with those various movements of the mind, arise those turns of expression, which we now distinguish by the learned names

names of Hyperbole, Prosopopœia, Simile, &c. but which are no other than the native original language of Poetry, among the most barbarous nations.

It appears from what has been said, that the first Compositions which were either recorded by Writing, or transmitted by Tradition, could be no other than Poetical Compositions. No other but these, could draw the attention of men in their rude uncivilised state. Indeed they knew no other. Cool reasoning, and plain discourse, had no power to attract savage Tribes, addicted only to hunting and war. There was nothing that could either rouse the Speaker to pour himself forth, or draw the crowd to listen, but the high powers of Passion, of Music, and of Song. This vehicle, therefore, and no other, could be employed by Chiefs and Legislators, when they meant to instruct or to animate their Tribes. There is, likewise, a farther reason why such Compositions only could be transmitted to posterity; because, before Writing was invented, Songs only could last, and be remembered. The ear gave assistance to the memory, by the help of Numbers; fathers repeated and sung them to their children; and by this oral tradition of national Ballads, were conveyed all the historical know-

knowledge, and all the instruction, of the first ages.

The earliest accounts which History gives us concerning all nations, bear testimony to these facts. In the first ages of Greece, Priests, Philosophers, and Statesmen, all delivered their instructions in Poetry. Apollo, Orpheus, and Amphion, their most antient Bards, are represented as the first tamers of mankind, the first founders of law and civilization. Minos and Thales sung to the Lyre the laws which they composed; and till the age immediately preceding that of Herodotus, History had appeared in no other form than that of Poetical Tales.

THE UNION OF POETRY AND MUSIC.

DURING the infancy of Poetry, all the different kinds of it lay confused, and were mingled in the same Composition, according as inclination, enthusiasm, or casual incidents, directed the Poet's strain. Indeed, not only were the different kinds of Poetry then mixed together, but all that we now call Letters, or Composition of any kind, was then blended in one mass. At first,

first, History, Eloquence, and Poetry, were all the same. Whoever wanted to move or to persuade, to inform or to entertain his countrymen and neighbours, whatever was the subject, accompanied his sentiments and tales with the melody of Song. This was the case in that period of Society when the character and occupations of the husbandman and the builder, the warrior and the statesman, were united in one person. When the progress of Society brought on a separation of the different Arts and Professions of Civil Life, it led also by degrees to a separation of the different literary provinces from each other.

The Art of Writing was in process of time invented; records of past transactions began to be kept; men, occupied with the subjects of policy and useful arts, wished now to be instructed and informed, as well as moved. They reasoned and reflected upon the affairs of life; and were interested by what was real, not fabulous, in past transactions. The Historian, therefore, now laid aside the buskins of Poetry; he wrote in Prose, and attempted to give a faithful and judicious relation of former events. The Philosopher addressed himself chiefly to the understanding. The Orator studied to persuade by reasoning, and retained more or less of the ancient

tient passionate and glowing Style, according as it was conducive to his purpose. Poetry became now a separate art, calculated chiefly to please, and confined generally to such subjects as related to the imagination and passions. Even its earliest companion, Music, was in a great measure divided from it.

The separation of Music from Poetry, produced consequences not favourable in some respects to Poetry, and in many respects hurtful to Music. As long as they remained united, Music enlivened and animated Poetry, and Poetry gave force and expression to musical sound. The Music of that early period was, beyond doubt, extremely simple; and must have consisted chiefly of such pathetic notes, as the voice could adapt to the words of the Song. Musical instruments, such as flutes, and pipes, and a lyre with a very few strings, appear to have been early invented among some nations; but no more was intended by these instruments, than simply to accompany the voice, and to heighten the melody of Song. The Poet's strain was always heard; and, from many circumstances, it appears, that among the antient Greeks, as well as among other nations, the Bard sung his verses, and played upon his harp or lyre at the same time. In this state, the art of Music was, when it produced all those great effects,

effects, of which we read so much in antient story. And certain it is, that from simple Music only, and from Music accompanied with Verse or Song, we are to look for strong expression, and powerful influence over the human mind. When instrumental Music came to be studied as a separate art, divested of the Poet's Song, and formed into the artificial and intricate combinations of harmony, it lost all its antient power of inflaming the hearers with strong emotions; and sunk into an art of mere amusement, among polished and luxurious nations.

OF PASTORAL POETRY.

THE great charm of Pastoral Poetry arises from the view which it exhibits of the tranquillity and happiness of a rural life. This pleasing illusion, therefore, the Poet must carefully maintain. He must display to us all that is agreeable in that state, but hide whatever is displeasing. Let him paint its simplicity and innocence to the full; but cover its rudeness and misery. Distresses, indeed, and anxieties, he may attribute to it; for it would be perfectly unnatural to suppose any condition of human life to be without them; but they must be of such a nature,

ture, as not to shock the fancy with any thing peculiarly disgusting in the pastoral life. The Shepherd may well be afflicted for the displeasure of his mistress, or for the loss of a favourite lamb. It is a sufficient recommendation of any state, to have only such evils as these to deplore. In short, it is the pastoral life somewhat embellished and beautified, at least seen on its fairest side only, that the Poet ought to present to us. But let him take care, that, in embellishing nature, he do not altogether disguise her; or pretend to join with rural simplicity and happiness, such improvements as are unnatural and foreign to it. If it be not exactly real life which he presents to us, it must, however, be somewhat that resembles it. This, in my opinion, is the general idea of Pastoral Poetry.

OF MILTON'S PARADISE LOST.

MILTON chalked out for himself a new, and very extraordinary road in Poetry. As soon as we open his *Paradise Lost*, we find ourselves introduced all at once into an invisible world, and surrounded with celestial and infernal beings. Angels and Devils are not the machinery, but principal actors, in the Poem; and
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what, in any other composition would be the marvellous, is here only the natural course of events. A subject so remote from the affairs of this world, may furnish ground to those who think such discussions material, to bring it into doubt, whether *Paradise Lost* can properly be classed among Epic Poems. By whatever name it is to be called, it is, undoubtedly one of the highest efforts of poetical genius; and in one great characteristic of the Epic Poem, Majesty and Sublimity, it is fully equal to any that bear that name.

The nature of the subject did not admit any great display of characters; but such as could be introduced are supported with much propriety. Satan, in particular, makes a striking figure, and is, indeed, the best drawn character in the Poem. Milton has not described him, such as we suppose an infernal spirit to be. He has, more suitably to his own purpose, given him a human, that is, a mixed character, not altogether void of some good qualities. He is brave and faithful to his troops. In the midst of his impiety, he is not without remorse. He is even touched with pity for our first parents; and justifies himself in his design against them, from the necessity of his situation. He is actuated by ambition and resentment, rather than by pure malice.

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malice. In short, Milton's Satan is no worse than many a conspirator or factious chief, that makes a figure in history. The different characters of Beelzebub, Moloc, Belial, are exceedingly well painted in those eloquent speeches which they make, in the Second Book. The good Angels, though always described with dignity and propriety, have more uniformity than the Infernal Spirits in their appearance; though among them, too, the dignity of Michael, the mild condescension of Raphael, and the tried fidelity of Abdiel, form proper characteristical distinctions. The attempt to describe God Almighty himself, and to recount dialogues between the Father and the Son, was too bold and arduous, and is that wherein our Poet, as was to have been expected, has been most unsuccessful. With regard to his human characters; the innocence of our first parents, and their love, are finely and delicately painted. In some of his speeches to Raphael and to Eve, Adam is, perhaps, too knowing and refined for his situation. Eve is more distinctly characterised. Her gentleness, modesty, and frailty, mark very expressively a female character.

Milton's great and distinguishing excellence is, his sublimity. In this, perhaps, he excels Homer; as there is no doubt of his leaving Virgil,
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and every other Poet, far behind him. Almost the whole of the First and Second Books of Paradise Lost are continued instances of the sublime. The prospect of Hell and of the fallen Host, the appearance and behaviour of Satan, the consultation of the infernal chiefs, and Satan's flight through Chaos to the borders of this world, discover the most lofty ideas that ever entered into the conception of any Poet. In the Sixth Book also, there is much grandeur, particularly in the appearance of the Messiah; though some parts of that book are censurable; and the witticisms of the Devils upon the effect of their artillery, form an intolerable blemish. Milton's sublimity is of a different kind from that of Homer. Homer's is generally accompanied with fire and impetuosity; Milton's possesses more of a calm and amazing grandeur. Homer warms and hurries us along; Milton fixes us in a state of astonishment and elevation. Homer's sublimity appears most in the description of actions; Milton's, in that of wonderful and stupendous objects.

But though Milton is most distinguished for his sublimity, yet there is also much of the beautiful, the tender, and the pleasing, in many parts of his work. When the scene is laid in Paradise, the imagery is always of the most gay and smiling kind. His descriptions shew an uncommonly

fertile imagination; and in his families, he is, for the most part, remarkably happy. They are seldom improperly introduced; seldom either low, or trite. They generally present to us images taken from the sublime or the beautiful class of objects; if they have any faults, it is their alluding too frequently to matters of learning, and to fables of antiquity. In the latter part of *Paradise Lost*, there must be confessed to be a falling off. With the fall of our first parents, Milton's genius seems to decline. Beauties, however, there are, in the concluding Books, of the tragic kind. The remorse and contrition of the guilty pair, and their lamentations over *Paradise*, when they are obliged to leave it, are very moving. The last Episode of the Angel's shewing Adam the fate of his posterity, is happily imagined; but, in many places, the execution is languid.

Milton's language and versification have high merit. His Style is full of majesty, and wonderfully adapted to his subject. His blank verse is harmonious and diversified, and affords the most complete example of the elevation, which our language is capable of attaining by the force of numbers. It does not flow like the French verse, in tame, regular, uniform melody, which soon tires the ear; but is sometimes smooth and
flowing,

flowing, sometimes rough; varied in its cadence, and intermixed with discords, so as to suit the strength and freedom of Epic Composition. Neglected and prosaic lines, indeed, we sometimes meet with; but, in a work so long, and in the main so harmonious, these may be forgiven.

On the whole, *Paradise Lost* is a Poem that abounds with beauties of every kind, and that justly entitles its Author to a degree of fame not inferior to any Poet; though it must be also admitted to have many inequalities. It is the lot of almost every high and daring genius, not to be uniform and correct. Milton is too frequently theological and metaphysical; sometimes harsh in his language; often too technical in his words, and affectedly ostentatious of his learning. Many of his faults must be attributed to the pedantry of the age in which he lived. He discovers a vigour, a grasp of genius equal to every thing that is great; if at some times he falls much below himself, at other times he rises above every Poet, of the antient or modern world.

ON TRAGEDY.

TRAGEDY, considered as an exhibition of the characters and behaviour of men, in some of the most trying and critical situations of life, is a noble idea of Poetry. It is a direct imitation of human manners and actions. For it does not, like the Epic Poem, exhibit characters by the narration and description of the Poet; but the Poet disappears; and the personages themselves are set before us, acting and speaking what is suitable to their characters. Hence, no kind of writing is so great a trial of the Author's profound knowledge of the human heart. No kind of writing has so much power, when happily executed, to raise the strongest emotions. It is, or ought to be, a mirror in which we behold ourselves, and the evils to which we are exposed; a faithful copy of the human passions, with all their direful effects, when they are suffered to become extravagant.

As Tragedy is a high and distinguished species of Composition, so also, in its general strain and spirit, it is favourable to virtue. Such power hath virtue happily over the human mind, by the wise and gracious constitution of our nature, that as admiration cannot be raised in Epic Poetry,
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so neither in Tragic Poetry can our passions be strongly moved, unless virtuous emotions be awakened within us. Every Poet finds, that it is impossible to interest us in any character, without representing that character as worthy and honourable, though it may not be perfect; and that the great secret for raising indignation, is to paint the person who is to be the object of it in the colours of vice and depravity. He may, indeed, nay, he must, represent the virtuous as sometimes unfortunate, because this is often the case in real life; but he will always study to engage our hearts in their behalf; and though they may be described as unprosperous, yet there is no instance of a Tragic Poet representing vice as fully triumphant, and happy, in the catastrophe of the piece. Even when bad men succeed in their designs, punishment is made always to attend them; and misery of one kind or other is shewn to be unavoidably connected with guilt. Love and admiration of virtuous characters, compassion for the injured and the distressed, and indignation against the authors of their sufferings, are the sentiments most generally excited by Tragedy. And, therefore, though Dramatic Writers may sometimes, like other Writers, be guilty of improprieties, though they may fail of placing virtue precisely in the due point of light, yet no reasonable person can deny Tragedy to be a moral species of Composition.

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THE ORIGIN OF TRAGEDY.

TRAGEDY, like other arts, was, in its beginnings, rude and imperfect. Among the Greeks, from whom our Dramatic Entertainments are derived, the origin of Tragedy was no other than the Song which was wont to be sung at the festival of Bacchus. A goat was the sacrifice offered to that God; after the sacrifice, the Priests, with the company that joined them, sung hymns in honour of Bacchus; and from the name of the victim, *Tragos*, a Goat, joined with *Ode*, a Song, undoubtedly arose the word, Tragedy.

These Hymns, or Lyric Poems, were sung sometimes by the whole company, sometimes by separate bands, answering alternately to each other; making what we call a Chorus, with its Strophes and Antistrophes. In order to throw some variety into this entertainment, and to relieve the Singers, it was thought proper to introduce a person who, between the Songs, should make a recitation in Verse. Thespis, who lived about 536 years before the Christian æra, made this innovation; and, as it was relished, Æschylus, who came 50 years after him, and who is properly the father of Tragedy, went a step farther,

ther, introduced a Dialogue between two persons, or actors, in which he contrived to interweave some interesting Story, and brought his actors on a Stage, adorned with proper scenery and decorations. All that these actors recited, was called Epifode, or additional Song; and the Songs of the Chorus were made to relate no longer to Bacchus, their original subject, but to the Story in which the Actors were concerned. This began to give the drama a regular form, which was soon after brought to perfection by Sophocles and Euripides. It is remarkable, in how short a space of time Tragedy grew up among the Greeks, from the rudest beginnings to its most perfect state. For Sophocles, the greatest and most correct of all the Tragic Poets, flourished only 22 years after Æschylus, and was little more than 70 years posterior to Thespis.

THE CHARACTER OF SHAKESPEARE.

THE first object which presents itself to us on the English Theatre, is the great Shakespeare. Great he may be justly called, as the extent and force of his natural genius, both for Tragedy and Comedy, are altogether unrivalled. But, at the same time, it is genius
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shooting wild ; deficient in just taste, and altogether unassisted by knowledge or art. Long has he been idolised by the British nation ; much has been said, and much has been written concerning him ; Criticism has been drawn to the very dregs, in commentaries upon his words and witticisms ; and yet it remains, to this day, in doubt, whether his beauties, or his faults, be greatest. Admirable scenes, and passages, without number, there are in his Plays ; passages beyond what are to be found in any other Dramatic Writer ; but there is hardly any one of his Plays which can be called altogether a good one, or which can be read with uninterrupted pleasure from beginning to end. Besides extreme irregularities in conduct, and grotesque mixtures of serious and comic in one piece, we are often interrupted by unnatural thoughts, harsh expressions, a certain obscure bombast, and a play upon words, which he is fond of pursuing ; and these interruptions to our pleasure too frequently occur, on occasions when we would least wish to meet with them. All these faults, however, Shakespeare redeems, by two of the greatest excellencies which any Tragic Poet can possess ; his lively and diversified paintings of character ; his strong and natural expressions of passion. These are his two chief virtues ; on these his merit rests. Notwithstanding his many absurdities,

ties, all the while we are reading his Plays, we find ourselves in the midst of our fellows; we meet with men, vulgar perhaps in their manners, coarse or harsh in their sentiments, but still they are men; they speak with human voices, and are actuated by human passions; we are interested in what they say or do, because we feel that they are of the same nature with ourselves. It is therefore no matter of wonder, that from the more polished and regular, but more cold and artificial performances of other Poets, the Public should return with pleasure to such warm and genuine representations of human nature. Shakespeare possesses likewise the merit of having created, for himself, a sort of world of præternatural beings. His witches, ghosts, fairies, and spirits of all kinds, are described with such circumstances of awful and mysterious solemnity, and speak a language so peculiar to themselves, as strongly to affect the imagination. His two master-pieces, and in which, in my opinion, the strength of his genius chiefly appears, are Othello and Macbeth. With regard to his historical plays, they are, properly speaking, neither Tragedies nor Comedies; but a peculiar species of Dramatic Entertainment, calculated to describe the manners of the times of which he treats, to exhibit the principal characters, and to fix our
imagina-

imagination on the most interesting events and revolutions of our own country.

ON DRAMATIC POETRY.

DRAMATIC Poetry has, among all civilized nations, been considered as a rational and useful entertainment, and judged worthy of careful and serious discussion. According as it is employed upon the light and the gay, or upon the grave and affecting incidents of human life, it divides itself into the two forms, of Comedy or Tragedy. But as great and serious objects command more attention than little and ludicrous ones; as the fall of a Hero interests the public more than the marriage of a private person; Tragedy has been always held a more dignified entertainment than Comedy. The one rests upon the high passions, the virtues, crimes, and sufferings of mankind; the other on their humours, follies, and pleasures. Terror and pity are the great instruments of the former; ridicule is the sole instrument of the latter.



F I N I S.

